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The extraordinary story of IKKA

How Delhi rapper Ankit Singh Patyal built a hip-hop legacy with versatile talent, hustle and collaboration

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+ LOVE LETTERS & ADVICE

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INDIA
Ed Sheeran.
Seriously.

> His [Sheeran's] down-to-earth and humble nature comes through wholeheartedly in this interview.
>
> — Susan Ray

Ed's World

It was fascinating to read about all that happens within Ed Sheeran's world and how he opens up about death, illness, grief, depression, and addiction. His down-to-earth and humble nature comes through wholeheartedly in this interview.

SPOTLIGHT

Prabh Deep's Collection

With his new deluxe version of his album 'Bhram,' rapper Prabh Deep is assuring fans like me that he's definitely not slowing down and is only going to excel further in his craft.

- Yasir Patel

The Mix
Fresh Indie Picks

Fresh Finds

One of my favorite reads is the Fresh Indie Picks section where I can learn about new releases from across India's independent music scene. A lot of these songs find their way into my playlists and reassure me of the abundant talent in this country.

- Suresh Solomon

The Mix
How Tragedy Stirred Mumbai Hip-Hop Artist Shia to Turn to Music

Shia Finds Her Path

It was pretty heartwarming to read about how hip-hop artist Shia found her feet in music after a tough few years in her personal life. Artists like her need to be supported and heard. I am proud to be a fan of Shia and I can't wait to see her perform live next.

- Lisa Agarwal

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Opening Act

Chloë Bailey Faces the Spotlight

MAKING A SOLO DEBUT wasn't easy for Chloë Bailey, but she's proud she got there. "There were so many people in my life — I'm not talking about online internet trolls, but people I was close to — who told me I couldn't do this," says the singer, 24, who brought the house down at *Rolling Stone*'s Future of Music showcase at SXSW in March, not long before she released her album, *In Pieces*. "Who said I wouldn't be good enough to do this on my own. That was scary as shit actually doing it, because there were times where I believed them. I believed the negative things being told to me. I just had to keep trusting myself." LARISHA PAUL

Bailey backstage at ACL Live at the Moody Theater in Austin

PHOTOGRAPH BY Samantha Tellez

The Mix

The Ballad of Bridget Everett

From her wild cabaret act to her intimate HBO series, the actor hits all the right notes

→

PHOTOGRAPHS BY Ellen Fedors

HAIR BY LIANA LE. THEO KOGAN USING DIOR FOREVER FOUNDATION FOR ART DEPT. GOWN AND STYLING BY LARRY KRONE FOR HOUSE OF LARRÉON. EARRINGS BY ALEXIS BITTAR. PHOTOGRAPHED AT THE PUBLIC THEATER IN NEW YORK CITY.

BRIDGET EVERETT

"Sam does things I'm scared to do," Everett says of her *Somebody* character.

BRIDGET EVERETT still has restaurant stress dreams. Never mind that she is a writer, star, executive producer, and the driving force behind *Somebody Somewhere*, the critically acclaimed, cult-favorite HBO show about a directionless woman who moves back to her hometown in middle age (Season Two premieres April 23). When Everett sleeps, it's the screaming customers and missing orders from her days as a server that haunt her.

"It's really weird, because of all the things that you could have a stress dream about, producing a television show — it's so fucking stressful," she says. "But what I dream about is 'Where's my fucking food?! Where's my goddamned spicy tuna roll?!' When you're doing that for 25, 30 years, it's in the bones."

It's a rainy, cold February evening, and we're having vodka martinis and calamari at the Library bar in Manhattan's East Village, right upstairs from Joe's Pub at the Public Theater. While Everett has had roles on *Inside Amy Schumer* and *Lady Dynamite*, and in movies like *Trainwreck*, Joe's is the place where she became famous to those in the know for her bawdy, sidesplitting, slyly emotional wild ride of a cabaret show. There, she stalks the stage barefoot, cleavage spilling out of her skimpy costume, chardonnay bottle in hand, leading the crowd in original song lyrics like "What do I gotta do to get that dick in my mouth?" and promising, "Some of you may not know me, but you will not fucking forget me." Her legion of superfans includes the Broadway legend Patti LuPone, who during a recent Saturday morning phone call, dug for the perfect word to describe Everett's presence before landing on one: "Hypnotizing."

"You don't know what's going to happen," says LuPone of Everett's act. "And then whatever happens is hypnotizing."

Everett's work in *Somebody Somewhere* — a show critics have described as "subtle," "modest," and "quiet" — is equally hypnotizing, if at the opposite end of the emotional spectrum. Co-created by Hannah Bos and Paul Thureen (who've worked on *High Maintenance* and *Mozart in the Jungle*) and semi-based on Everett's life, it follows Sam (Everett), who returned to tiny Manhattan, Kansas, to care for her dying sister and, lacking a better plan, stayed. The role taps the side of Everett that is vulnerable, self-deprecating, lonely, and full of self-doubt — a far cry from the woman who motorboats audience members or asks them to lick whipped cream off her leg during her cabaret shows.

When *Somebody Somewhere* premiered in January 2022, Everett says, she was nervous about such an intimate show finding an audience. "I just thought, 'This show is not cool,'" she says. "'This show doesn't have an edge. It's very simple and kind of wholesome.' And I worried that that wouldn't be enough."

Still, though the show doesn't mention the pandemic, Sam seemed to connect with viewers who had been through two intense years of loneliness and grief and were struggling to restart life. "That feeling of giving up on yourself resonates so much with me," Everett says. "And I never knew that a bunch of other people felt that same way too."

That ordinariness and humanity run through every fiber of the show, including the casting. Everett, 51, describes herself as someone who doesn't really look like anyone else on TV: "six feet tall, plus-size, with big-ass titties." She and her co-stars, mostly in their forties and fifties, all look like real-real people — not just Hollywood's version of real people. A number of them are friends Everett has known for quite some time (Mary Catherine Garrison, who plays Sam's sister Trish, was Everett's roommate for nearly 10 years), which helps explain the show's authentic vibes, says Everett: "This [show] felt very warm, because it's so many friends and nobody's famous — we're all at a similar level."

As Jeff Hiller, who plays Sam's best friend Joel, puts it, "She could have some show called *Titties!*, where she runs around shaking her boobs. And instead she creates this soft-underbelly TV show where she's raw and vulnerable and lets other people have roles that are interesting. I'm grateful to her for that, for not creating *Titties!* Though I would have watched the hell out of that."

While there is little broad, physical comedy, *Somebody* can be laugh-out-loud funny, as when uptight Trish finds herself running a lucrative side business crafting sweary throw pillows that use the word "cunt." The second episode of the new season ups the ante with two-plus minutes of graphic toilet humor that sees Sam and Joel on the phone with each other while both deal with possible food poisoning. "We've reached a new level of intimacy!" Joel cries out amid a cacophony of fart and diarrhea sound effects.

"We might lose a few people," Everett says, "but there's a lot of other beautiful stuff that happens in the season."

Season Two also finds Sam building a better relationship with Trish and reconnecting with a former voice teacher. (Though the series is not a musical, there are several moments when Sam lets loose and viewers are treated to Everett's holy pipes.) Music holds the key to Sam's awakening — another plot point lifted from Everett's own story. She chokes up talking about the "101 million ways that music has saved my life," and how her own voice teachers "understood a part of me nobody else saw." Then she quickly cuts the heartfelt moment with a joke: "So anyway, I bawled last week after three martinis."

While we're talking, a chef swings by our table wearing a *Somebody Somewhere* ball cap. Our server is from Manhattan, Kansas, just like Everett. The team at Joe's is one part of her showbiz family, as is the audience here, which gave her a standing ovation when she announced one night in 2015 that she was booking enough work to finally leave her restaurant job.

Now, she's firmly focused on keeping her quiet little HBO series real and raw. She tucked a menopause joke into one of the new episodes, she says, adding, "If we get Season Three, we're going to have a full-blown town hall about hot flashes and dry twats."

I ask about HBO being the home of shows starring Jean Smart and Jennifer Coolidge and Molly Shannon, and whether their success — and hers — signals that TV is finally ready to center a women over 50 in shows that take place outside a retirement home or a hospital.

"It gives me hope that I might not be on the bread line after this show goes kaput," she says. "Maybe there'll be something else, and I won't have to just play, I don't know, Paul Rudd's ants in a movie." LISA TOZZI

EVERETT ESSENTIALS

LOVE YOU MORE

This 2017 Amazon pilot showed what Everett could do onscreen, playing a "big girl with a big personality" who's a counselor for young adults with Down syndrome.

SEX AND THE CITY

Yes, her scene is just 14 seconds, but as Cathy, who shows up drunk to a job interview with Carrie Bradshaw, Everett might be the highlight of the film.

INSIDE AMY SCHUMER

She got to flaunt her sketch skills and her cabaret act, with taped segments of songs like "Eat It, Eat It," which is not about food.

SHATABDI CHAKRABARTI

Indian Ocean Release Ecology-Centric Eighth Album 'Tu Hai'

The New Delhi fusion stalwarts turn newscasters of doom and hope in an animated video for "Jaadu Maaya"

What's a supervillain dinosaur doing hurling asteroids at the Earth? That question is answered in – of all the places – Indian Ocean's somber new music video for their new song "Jaadu Maaya," featuring lyrics and direction by Varun Grover and co-direction and animation by Ankit Kapoor.

Part of their upcoming eighth album *Tu Hai*, "Jaadu Maaya" sees Indian Ocean paint a bleak picture of the planet, pointing to apathy from those in power. But it also serves as a warning and reminder for people to take their own steps towards eco-preservation for the Earth's sustainability.

> **"The music video is a powerful and heart-rending portrayal of a world falling apart."**

With Indian Ocean teaming up with Grover, they're presenting the follow-up to their 2020 single "Akhiyan Udeek Diyan" and the first album since 2014's *Tandanu*. A description in the press release for "Jaadu Maaya" describes the lyrics to have "layered meanings, mingling despair and hope." The statement adds, "The track's themes are rooted in the band's affinity for environmental consciousness. Despite the stark realities of climate change and environmental degradation, Jaadu Maaya reminds us that there is always a silver lining, and that it's never too late to take meaningful action towards creating a more sustainable future."

In the animated music video, Indian Ocean band members Rahul Ram, Amit Kilam, Himanshu Joshi, Nikhil Rao and Tuheen Chakravorty take on the guise of prime-time news hosts, each presenting their own segments as they sing the lyrics to "Jaadu Maaya." The press statement adds, "The accompanying music video is a powerful and heart-rending portrayal of a world falling apart, while we argue about small issues there's a larger threat that we need to be aware of, which is presented as an allegory."

Tu Hai – released in a piecemeal fashion between April and May – includes songs like "Jungle," a ballad featuring saxophonist George Brooks, the philosophizing "Iss Tan Dhan" featuring Tamil lyrics contributed by ghatam maestro Vikku Vinayakram, the two-parter title track which delves of existential and spiritual questions and "Rebirth," an instrumental closing track originating in guitarist Rao's Carnatic music affinities. The full album will be available by May 5th.

Indian Ocean bassist-vocalist Rahul Ram further explained in a statement that *Tu Hai* is spiritual and contemplative and has been a "transformative expedition" for the band over the years it's taken for them to finish it. "We completed the production in 2019 but there was an unfortunate pandemic outbreak and we had to rethink our plans. During the lockdown, the importance of how we need to cooperate and coexist with nature became such a glaring hard truth and that if we give nature a chance, it will recuperate."

Ram adds that the album is a "tribute to that universal thought as well as a friendly reminder to all of humanity to make sustainably wise choices that are not just fodder for your outer appearances but also a haven for your inner temple." Indian Ocean will soon hit the road to promote the album, with Ram noting that the band will travel to different parts of the country between April and June as part of a nine-city tour, with more dates to be added. **ANURAG TAGAT**

COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS

Anoushka Maskey And Cosmic Grooves Release Bossa Nova-Inspired Song 'The Search for Wild Geese'

The new track includes refreshing horn parts, slick guitar work, lush vocals and more

Although Mumbai-based artists, singer-songwriter Anoushka Maskey and producer Pranay Bakshi aka Cosmic Grooves, have worked on each other's songs through the years, the duo have now come together to release their collaborative effort, the poignant new track "The Search for Wild Geese." Maskey says, "This year, we planned to focus more on solo releases, but the songs we make keep bringing us together." She adds, "The work Pranay and I put into it and the love we were feeling for it drove us to release it as a duo."

"The Search for Wild Geese" began shaping up when Bengaluru bassist Sahil Mathew sent Maskey and Bakshi his take on the song which leaned towards bossa nova. "Immediately, we knew that was the direction we wanted to take," says Maskey.

Lyrically, Maskey has penned heavy lyrics that touch upon heartbreak in friendship and how that affects people mentally. "I wanted our listeners to be able to relate to a spiraling mind, but also feel hopeful about the future and not be knocked down by how our minds sometimes make things much worse than they really are," she says. Maskey is also quick to point out that both Bakshi and her are not jazz musicians, but that this is their first attempt working on a piece that comes close to jazz music. "We only made what felt natural and we were never trying to sound like a certain artist or establish directional rules. We just went with the flow and ended up loving what we came up with," says the singer.

The new song opens with Maskey counting us in before we hear Mathew's groovy bass line. Plucked guitar parts juxtaposed with melodic guitar lines by Rinik then chime in as delicate percussion work and Maskey's radiant vocals lift the track higher. There's also horn parts that stand out throughout the song.

With live gigs now back in full swing, Maskey has been hitting the stages to perform live at various gigs. Ask the singer-songwriter what it's like to be back performing regularly and she says, "I have had so much fun performing for smaller and more attentive audiences. I am learning not to be too taken by how confident I feel on bigger stages with larger audiences because turns out it's the smaller, more intimate gigs that really make you nervous!"

At the moment, Maskey is lining up more releases for 2023 with a folk song, a pop track and an indie-pop song all in the works. "My focus lies on consistent releases, growing my musicianship and taking every gig opportunity in with open arms," she says. **DAVID BRITTO**

COURTESY OF THE BAND

Many Roots Ensemble Release New Single 'Insaniyat (Prime Time)' Featuring Swadesi

The track is the multi-genre group's first release since 2019

GOA-BASED MULTI-GENRE GROUP Many Roots Ensemble – comprising guitarist Subid Khan, bassist Souvik Bhattacharya drummer Abhishek Debsikdar and saxophonist Jarryd Rodrigues – are back with new music after four years. Their new funky yet gritty song "Insaniyat (Prime Time)" follows 2019's three-track EP *Black Indian* and features members of hip-hop group Swadesi; MC Mawali and the late MC Tod Fod. Organist and synth player Manavon Massar has also contributed to the song.

In this interview with *Rolling Stone India*, Many Roots Ensemble talk to us about their new song, how the collaboration with Swadesi came about, their forthcoming album and more.

What has the band been up to since *Black Indian* was released?

Khan: We played some major festivals like NH7 Pune, Ctrl Alt Delete in Mumbai and we were also doing a bunch of local pub and club gigs around the country. We had this momentum going till early 2020 when we played at the Kala Ghoda festival and then the Luna music festival in Sri Lanka too. Once the pandemic struck, all of us had to go back to our individual hometowns. But after the pandemic situation relaxed a bit, we reconvened in Goa, which was much more open and active in terms of live music at that time.

Debsikdar: Since bringing things back in Goa, we have been quite active with live gigs pan-India, with a few seasonal breaks which were used to write new material for the further release of a full-length album. A considerable few years have passed since any recorded music has been released, and we feel deeply discontent about the same but we are turning that over, starting with this single.

What can you tell me about the new song "Insaniyat (Prime Time)?"

Debsikdar: 'Insaniyat' came about as a very layered composition. Souvik, our bassist, came down with the bass groove first. Then, I figured the beat to it after which, Subid came about with the rhythmic guitar vamp and theme melody. We definitely felt a very Rage Against The Machine kind of energy from the tune and wanted to get rappers on board. The tune became much heavier after the sax and the rappers and the keys layers came in. The entire lyrical credit and the title of the song goes to MC Tod Fod and MC Mawali. They have written about some major truisms that need to be said, regarding the surge of majoritarian religious and casteist fundamentalism and extremism that we are witnessing in this country for some years now. The sad truth still remains that our brother MC Tod Fod is no more, but his legacy will live on.

Khan: We weren't too happy with the previous version at the time so we shelved it. However, during the pandemic, we had tons of time on our hands. I took the stems of the recording and went to the Swadesi crew's headquarters in Aarey Colony, where they had a home recording setup. The vocals of MC Tod Fod and MC Mawali were recorded there. Manavon Massar sent in some keys, which he recorded in Shillong. The guitar solo was also re-dubbed at home after which, Jarryd, our sax player, added his parts. After all that, we then sent it to Tamzid Rahman of Space Cat Studios to mix and master the track.

HUM
DEKHENGE

> *"We have been gigging with the MCs of the Swadesi Crew on and off for a few years now and it has been really fun working with them! MC Tod Fod was our collaborator for the longest time until his untimely death," says Debsikdar.*

How did the collaboration with MC Mawali and the late MC Tod Fod for this song come about?

Khan: When we initially came across Swadesi, we really felt that what these guys were talking about was real. They were talking about important social issues, about environmental consciousness, tribals and their rights to their land and their way of life, the social workers who are at the lowest rung of our society, etc. as opposed to the bling-bling, flex-flex, vulgar content that we see in most contemporary hip-hop. Also, the fact that they rap in local languages like Hindi, Marathi, Gujarati, etc. and incorporating elements of Konnakol in their rap, was great. They are really owning what they do, which we found inspiring. Lastly but also very importantly, the energy they bring on stage really complements the energy we bring as a band!

Debsikdar: We have been gigging with the MCs of the Swadesi Crew on and off for a few years now and it has been really fun working with them! MC Tod Fod was our collaborator for the longest time until his untimely death. He then brought Mawali in and we did a bunch of gigs with both of them on board.

Rodrigues: When it came to 'Insaniyat,' we first played Tod Fod the tune, which was basically the groove and hook line. Initially, he would freestyle over it at gigs we would do together. But then we thought how fun it would be to actually write something together after which, he started writing some verses on it. He then brought up the idea of bringing Mawali on board too, and we were totally game for that, considering how much we love their work and vibe with them. They've done such a stellar job on it, with the message they're trying to convey and also in the way they deliver and express that message.. This has been a much-awaited collaboration.

What can people expect from the upcoming album?

Khan: The upcoming album is currently under process. We are ideally looking at eight tunes, and if all goes as planned, we should be able to release it by the end of 2023. Right now, we are in the process of fine-tuning the arrangements, thinking of collaborations and features, etc. The sonic imprint of the album is going to be wide. We are bringing in all our influences, which is pretty much the core ideology behind the band, to not be limited to genres and specifications but to embrace all our musical influences. One can expect sounds inspired by afro jazz, afrobeat, hip hop, funk, R&B, neo-soul, Balkan and Ethiopian sounds. Most importantly, fat and delicious grooves.. DAVID BRITTO

COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS

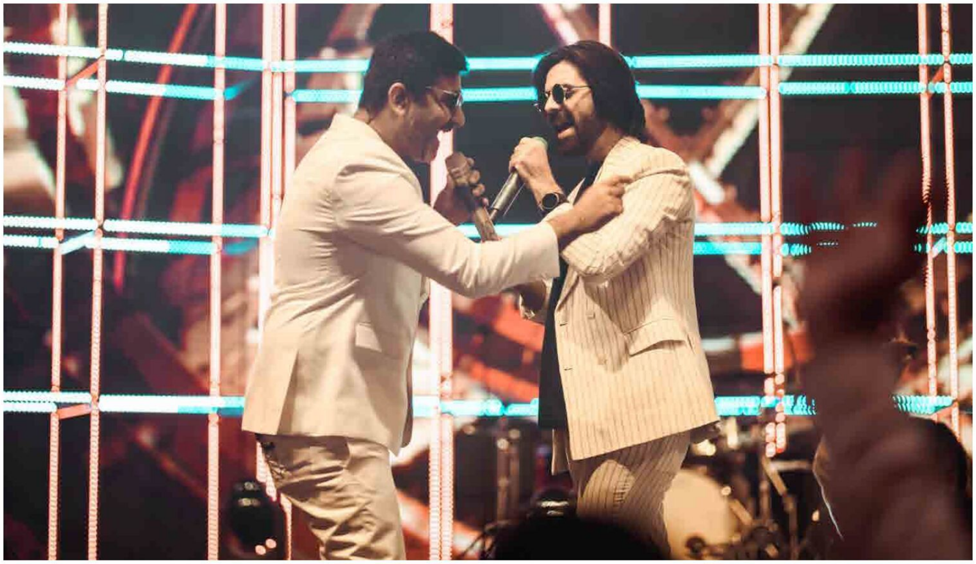
Composer Duo Sachin Jigar on How There's Room for Everyone in the Industry

Songs like "Fark Nahi Padta" features rapper DRV, while singer Saba Azad leads "Sab Farzi" off the recent web series Farzi

Composer duo Sachin Sanghvi and Jigar Saraiya - Sachin-Jigar - live in concert.

Every time one of their songs has become popular, composers Sachin Sanghvi and Jigar Saraiya (Sachin-Jigar) lose sleep. Sanghvi says over a video call from their studio, “We come from a place where we don’t want to repeat ourselves.”

From “Saibo” off 2011 film Shor In The City’s soundtrack to “Apna Bana Le” sung by Arijit Singh for *Bhediya* in 2022, Sachin-Jigar have steadily defined what it means to be composing for varied audiences in India and beyond. Although they certainly serve big romantic and grandiose numbers for Bollywood movies like many in the industry, there’s also a certain edginess to them, especially when they get to compose for web series.



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

Among those recent ones is *Farzi*, the crime thriller created by filmmaker duo Raj & DK (who are also behind another action and crime series, *The Family Man*). With songs like “Paisa Hai Toh” featuring singer-composer Vishal Dadlani and hip-hop artist Mellow D, Madboy/Mink’s Saba Azad on the synth-inflated “Sab Farzi” and “Fark Nahi Padta” featuring rapper DRV aka Dhruv Rajpal and singer-composer Nikhil Paul George, Sachin-Jigar push the envelope even further. Jigar Saraiya says the brief was pretty much inviting them to break barriers of how Hindi music can be perceived. He adds, “Raj and DK were very particular about how it [music for their show] sounds and they’ve always wanted it to be new and coming-of-age-sounding stuff. When that’s the brief, it automatically changes your perception on even how to compose a certain song, because it needs to lend itself into a newer soundscape.”

Sachin-Jigar, were, at the end of the day, driven by the characters and story of *Farzi* – about an artist (essayed by Shahid Kapoor) turned counterfeiter who dreams big and plays with fire – and channeled indifference, society’s double standards and the inter-generational relationship with money. Sanghvi adds, “With Raj and DK and Jigar in the mix, anything we do cannot sound like anything we’ve done before. It’s a great starting point.”

How much did the composer duo have to push themselves to arrive at this sound, with these specific talents? Sanghvi notes that being edgy is not enough. “You always need to have meat, have the substance there. You’re serving a script, after all,” he says. Saraiya adds, “We don’t want to get into the loop of sounding a certain way because that stops or limits us from exploring and brewing. That’s a basic instinct.” He points out how, in “Saibo,” it was originally intended to just have piano and a little guitar. “We didn’t want an inch of synth in it,” Saraiya says. He cites references to bands like Coldplay, who started out in alt-rock and went on to make electronic and atmospheric pop music. “That’s what evolving is about,” Saraiya adds.

The duo is all praise for the artists on *Farzi* songs – DRV (who also wrote a bit of lyrics for “Fark Nahi Padta”), Azad, Mellow D and Dadlani. While the series also features a composition by Tanishk Bagchi with singers Raghav Meattle and Anumita Nadesan, Sachin-Jigar are always keeping their ear to the ground about finding new talent from Indian indie to tap for their work.

> *“We want to make a clear distinction, a wall between our music and our web show music,” says Saraiya.*

Saraiya says, “We want to make a clear distinction, a wall between our music and our web show music.” Sanghvi notes he’s a big fan of singer-songwriter Rohit Vinta and pop duo Mitraz, as well as Nadesan’s songs. Saraiya points to the affable nature of singer-songwriter Anuv Jain’s songs and digs the work of singer Madhubanti Bagchi. He adds, “I recently heard Osho Jain’s ‘Kya Meri Galti Thi’ It’s beautiful how there’s a bit of an alternative rock coming back and how these songs are all very conversational and matter-of-fact.”

With Gujarati music, Bollywood music, web series soundtracks and their individual releases as well, it’s no surprise to hear that the duo are very happy about where the music industry has taken them, like when they mixed electro and reggae for “Babaji Ki Booti” from 2013 film *Go Goa Gone*. Saraiya admits that there was a span of about four years where they had to “stick to the formula” but they tried as much to push back. “We are now getting back to the reality and the goodness of being a music composer for Bollywood. If any composers out there, even upcoming composers out there reading this – just make the music that you feel like, even for Bollywood, not only as independent artists, because I think times have gone back to being good times,” he says.

Sanghvi has a smile on his face by this point and he’s in agreement. “There’s a newfound love to go back to the keyboard and compose something original and not worry about whether there is an audience for it or not, or whether it will hit the charts or not. It just feels like there’s room for everyone, there’s room for creativity.” He adds, “I wake up with a sense of confidence every day and say, ‘*Aaj kuch accha naya banate hai*’ [let’s make something good and new] without the worry of someone telling you, ‘*Yaar kuch tabla dholak dal de*.’ [please add some tabla or dholak to this song]” **ANURAG TAGAT**

Jzzy Releases Pop-Punk Debut EP ‘Scribbles’

The four-track record showcases energetic songs, slick lyricism, soaring vocals and more

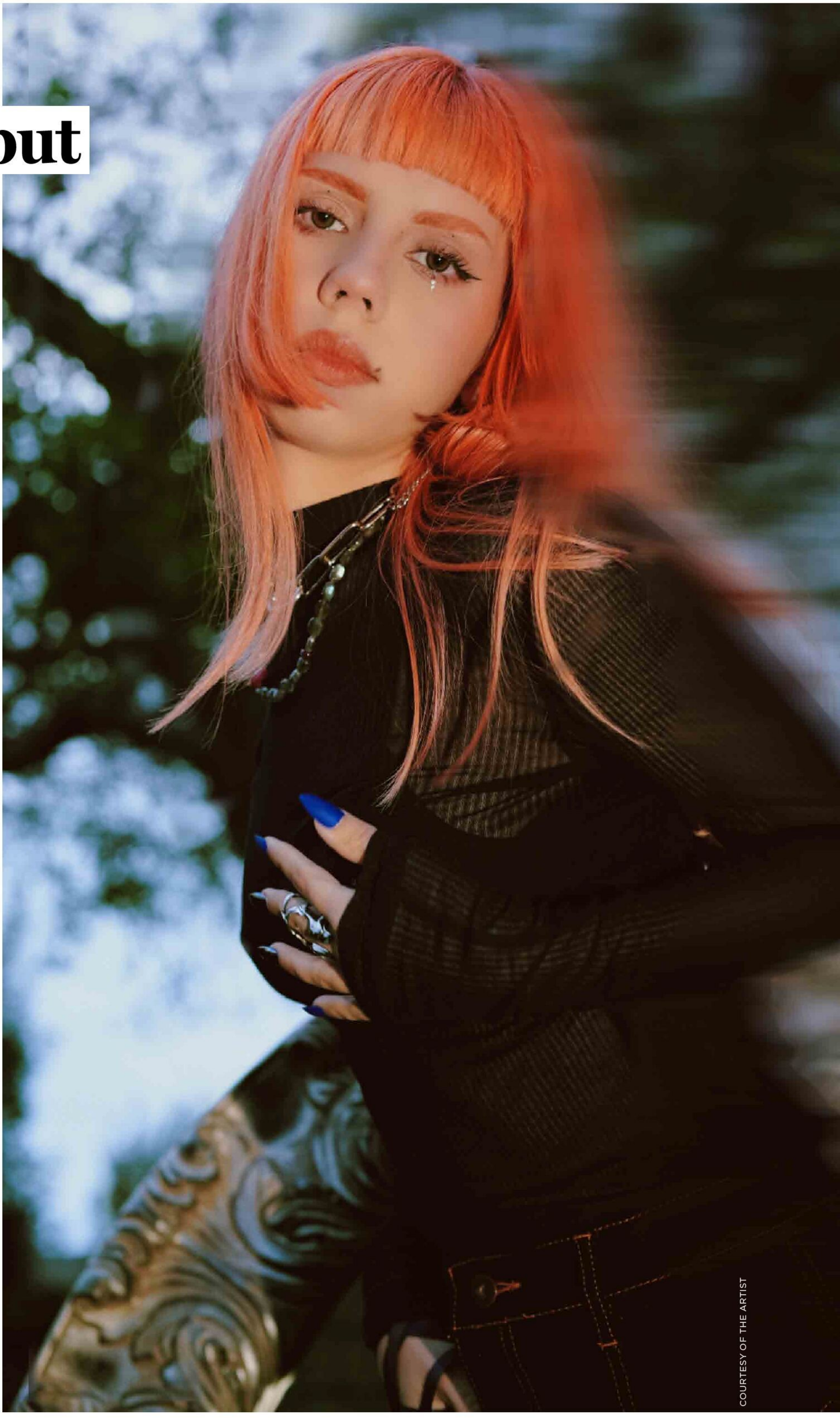
After releasing her flavorful single “After Effects” last year, Indo-American pop artist Jasmine Mohammed aka Jzzy moved from Ajmer to Los Angeles. “I didn’t know a single soul in L.A. before moving here, so having to figure everything out on my own was quite overwhelming especially when you are coming from another country,” says the artist.

Jzzy eventually became acquainted with producer Nick Kauffman. The pair began working on new music together and Jzzy eventually released a new single called “HELMET” earlier this year. After working on more music with Kauffman, Jzzy decided on putting out a four-track EP entitled *Scribbles*. She says, “I decided to release a few of them [the new songs] as a mixtape, or EP, rather than individually because it feels more like little samples of what’s to come. It’s like scribbles in my notebook but in the form of music.” Jzzy adds, “Scribbles aren’t perfect, they’re messy and with those messy moments, that’s when my brain works.”

Scribbles opens with the rocking “FOMO” (Fear of Missing Out) which is about a recurring theme Jzzy has had in her personal life. On the soft ballad “Reminisce Me” Jzzy sings about first relationships and their memories. Next is the dark pop offering “I’ll Start With Your Name First” which according to Jzzy is a “song born from the idea of little red riding hood and how as a kid I always wanted to think of ways to defeat the big bad wolf.” However, she adds, “Then as we were making the song I just became more in tune with feminine rage.” The EP then closes with the previously released pop single “HELMET.” Talking about the track, Jzzy says, “It’s just me pretending to be a rich confident girl who can have anything and everything she wants and an opportunity to use my favorite quote of all time by Blair Waldorf, ‘Life’s tough, get a helmet!’”

With this record, Jzzy offers plenty both lyrically and sonically. She says, “I myself am not a straightforward person and you’re getting a little taste of all the parts of me in this collection.”

Jzzy is currently lining up a few shows in Los Angeles and will also be coming back to India to shoot a music video too. “*Scribbles* is a little teaser of what I am capable of and I feel like this is just the beginning of a crazy journey. I can’t wait to see how I will evolve and where this is going to take me,” she says. DAVID BRITTO



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

L.Y.D. Returns with New Ethereal Single 'Parasol Pine'

The track follows the Mumbai/Munich artist's 2022 release 'Luna'

MICHAEL KROSNY

LAST OCTOBER, MUMBAI/MUNICH VOCALIST, COMPOSER AND DJ LYDIA Hendrikje aka L.Y.D. released her R&B-meets-soul offering "Luna." Now, she's back with a brand-new single in the shape of the silky "Parasol Pine." The new song retains Hendrikje's R&B sound while she also immerses listeners with modern jazz-pop elements and even delivers infectious vocal melodies across the track.

In this interview with *Rolling Stone India*, L.Y.D. talks to us about her new single "Parasol Pine," getting back to performing live, her forthcoming album and more.

What have you been up to since "Luna" came out and how's that process been of getting back to releasing music regularly?

I'm trying to basically eventually put it all on an album and I would like to make it a nice vinyl because I really feel like we don't really hold anything in our hands anymore. When we make music sometimes it can feel that something is not finished. So, I've just been planning that basically and I have lined out the album. All the songs are pretty much there and I just need to produce and arrange them, but most of the stuff is already there, so I've been doing that.

Your new song "Parasol Pine" has a summery vibe to it. When did you write it and what can you tell me about this song?

I remember making the groove and laying down the chords a while back, I think just before COVID. It must have been March or April because every year around March or April, no matter if I'm in Europe or in India, I get this longing to go on a holiday. In Europe, it's because we have long winters, so by the time it's April, people are just so done with it. In Bombay, it's because we work so hard through the winters because that's season time and everyone has gigs and everything's going on and people are just exhausted and feel like having a holiday.

I had that feeling of just going to a place with a sweet life and where you feel like you can relax and actually, from that point of view this song means a lot to me because I am a dreamer. I try to live more in the moment for sure, but I do escape into these little sweet pockets where I feel like something that inspires you in the middle of the day when you feel a bit empty and I'm trying to compose something. I do kind of like dream myself away to places that I've been that inspire me, things that I've experienced. The song is a bit of a chapter and it speaks about that longing. But I mean, it's also a wish to get away and get some rest and arrive somewhere. So, it's like that memory of a holiday mode or of refreshing yourself and the longing for it too.

The vocals and harmonies stand out on the song, what can you tell me about the recording and production process for it?

I always loved harmonies. I really love just playing around with making vocal harmonies. This is the first production that is my first collaboration. I produced most of it and arranged it, but I work with a producer in London now, his name is Alessandro de Barbera, and he co-produced this. I think that gives it a slightly different sound but it still fits with 'Luna.' The vocals I actually did record them at home. I really enjoyed that too, because I feel most relaxed. This song took me a while to make the melody. I changed it around quite a few times.

Do you have any plans to perform your new songs live?

This is the most exciting part of it for me. I want to put together a nice set with a full band and also maybe have like a smaller setup so that I'm a bit more flexible in how I can play the tunes. I have recently also seen some artists that do quite a tasteful job with the backing track and playing keys and singing and maybe with one more musician like a drummer or something. I think it can happen if you spend some time on it, you tweak your live performance. I'm super excited about that because I honestly think that's the reason why we make music, at least for me. I want to perform. So it'll be nice to bring this to life.

What can you tell me about the upcoming album?

It depends a little bit on the funding that I'm getting because you have to put a lot of money into it in the sense that I'm collaborating with some producers, I want to shoot a few music videos and I want to get it printed on vinyl. So far it's like 12 songs and It's actually a little bit of a diary, like a storybook from the beginning of when I moved to India till now. There's some very new songs and there's some songs that have been just lying there since maybe 2017. They're all about just love and life in Bombay, personal growth, self-realization, all of those things that we go through. The learnings of the last six or seven years. I'm actually super excited to put it together. The whole album, I think the earliest I would release the full product would be realistically in a year. Until then I'll have singles coming out. **DAVID BRITTO**

Sanjana Devarajan Releases New Dreamy Melancholic Song 'Nee Venda'

The track is the Mumbai singer-songwriter's first release of 2023

After the release of her 2020 four-track debut EP *Mood*, Mumbai-based singer-songwriter Sanjana Devarajan put out a number of singles. Now, she's back with a brand-new track, the pop-infused bilingual song (Hindi and Tamil) called "Nee Venda." Devarajan says, "'Nee Venda' started off as a trilingual song with Tamil, Hindi and English, with a lot more Tamil in it. But as we kept working on it, I realized that it's best to keep it bilingual more because my Tamil is quite broken [*laughs*]."

The track includes lush and dreamy soundscapes while Devarajan's breezy vocals make it quite the earworm. Through her lyrics, the artist sings about painful separation. She says, "The chorus means, 'I don't want you, you go. I'm enough for myself now.'" The song has been produced by Himonshu Parikh.

There's also a music video released to accompany the track in which Devarajan is seen going through the ups and downs of a relationship. On putting the video together, she says, "I was nervous, throughout. But I had an incredible team that pulled off the entire shoot in 10 hours! I'm grateful and happy for this experience."

Devarajan also recalls that in 2020, she performed "Nee Venda" for Mumbai guitarist-composer Ehsaan Noorani. "He complimented my voice and singing which in a lot of ways encouraged me and motivated me to push my limits," says the singer-songwriter. She adds, "Before the release, I shared the song with Sir to get his inputs and he just said, 'Lovely song Sanjana. It's got hit potential, I really like it, it's got a gorgeous hook and the singing is fab [sic].' Next, Devarajan is already lining up more music to be released which will be out soon. DAVID BRITTO

PRASHIN JAGGER

Zohran Miranda Releases Nostalgia-Filled Debut EP 'Time for Two'

The five-track record features vocalists Yamini Lavanian and pop duo Simetri

HERBERT FERNANDES

After releasing his 'Quadrilogy' of singles between 2020 and 2021, Mumbai-based guitarist-vocalist Zohran Miranda is now back with his five-track debut EP entitled *Time for Two*.

The songs on the new record were all written at different stages of Miranda's life. He says, "In fact, I always thought releasing singles was the way to go in a post-2020 world, so the idea of an EP didn't even come to me until Jovian [Soans] finished mixing the third song 'Courage.'" Miranda adds, "For this record, we saw a theme and a story slowly building with each track into a cohesive whole."

Time for Two has been co-produced by Miranda and Soans and includes a retro sound while R&B, soul, funk and electro-dance music creep in at times. "We've worked tirelessly to get the retro-modern pop sound to tie the songs together and chase the nostalgia in everyone's hearts," says Miranda.

According to Miranda, the EP covers themes of "expansion, transformation and ascension." The musician explains that at times he felt that he was only good enough to be a session guitarist. He says, "Not having a voice to say anything on my own, to breaking through of my comfort demons that I had befriended along the way and then realizing there's a whole world I didn't have courage to know existed within me." The artist adds, "My tree of life spreads its branches to find new sonic worlds to grow into harmonically, emotionally maturing to write about larger-than-life thoughts."

> *"We've worked tirelessly to get the retro-modern pop sound to tie the songs together and chase the nostalgia in everyone's hearts," says Miranda.*

Apart from Soans, Miranda also called upon singers Yamini Lavanian (heard on "Time for Two" and "Courage") and pop duo Simetri consisting of Riya and Simran Duggal ("8-BIT Rules (Reprise)") to come onboard the EP. Other artists to contribute to the record include drummer Aditya Ashok, bassists Rushad Mistry and Ralph Menezes, and keyboardists Beven Fonseca, Adrian D'souza, Natasha Pinto and Vatan Dhuriya. On his part, Miranda offers juicing guitar parts and scintillating solos.

Currently, Miranda is chalking out ways to take the music live at gigs and festivals for the upcoming season. There's also an animated music video coming out soon for the record's title track. The guitarist is also ready with more music too. He says, "We are actually already into production of a possible full-length album, which we plan to launch just before touring the live set. That will give us a good catalog of original tunes to tour the next couple of years." **DAVID BRITTO**

Mumbai's Reena Gilbert Walks a Balance Between Singer-Composer and Sound Engineer

The artist recently released a euphoric electronic-pop song "Jaane Kyun," sung by Aditi Singh Sharma

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

As a singer, songwriter, composer, producer and sound engineer, Reena Gilbert sees things in a straightforward way when working on a music project in any capacity. "I just want the song to do well," she says over a call.

Starting just over a decade ago, Gilbert recalls how she always wanted to do something related to music, building upon a childhood fascination with musical instruments. "I started learning guitars, and then I had my own small setup on my Windows machine. And I bought a sound card for myself. I had no idea what sound engineering is. So I just used to Google stuff," Gilbert says. Recording covers and gradually building her home recording setup, she realized sound engineering could be a career path as well. Given that no one else in her family had a background in professional music, they were understandably skeptical.

At that point, Gilbert – fresh out of 12th standard as an 18-year-old – found that most sound engineering courses required an undergraduate degree. She says with a laugh, "So then my parents pushed me into computer engineering. I had to finish that and then after that, I was like, 'Nothing doing, *mereko* sound engineering *hi karna hai*.'" Her initial motive all along was to make music, but her career trajectory took her into the technical side of things, leading her to work in studios across Mumbai and being a live sound engineer of A.R. Rahman.

Knowing how to make a song — from songwriting to producing and mixing and mastering stage — is a big plus, according to Gilbert. "The kind of sound you have in mind, you have the whole picture and it just becomes easier to execute it rather than explaining it to anyone else. You know what you're looking for," she says. The artist says it's nevertheless fun working with producers as well and bouncing her ideas off musician friends and fellow engineers. "It's always good to have other peoples' perspectives also," Gilbert adds.

In recent times, Gilbert has released music as singer-songwriter as well as a composer and producer, donning different roles. The most recent release is "Jaane Kyun," a heartwarming, catchy electronic-pop song featuring Aditi Singh Sharma on vocals. With lyrics and composing duties helmed by Gilbert, "Jaane Kyun" follows songs like "Bol De" (featuring singer Soham Naik) and "Tu Aur Main" (featuring singer Keshuv Huria) which were released via music platform Wynk.

The artist says she has plenty more coming up, becoming a fixture in the Hindi pop space. "I've been planning to release a lot of new singles and I'm planning to collaborate with many more singers. I won't be naming them as yet, but I'm looking forward to putting those out," Gilbert says. ANURAG TAGAT

Sukhnidh Offers Atmospheric Debut Single 'One Woman Band'

The Mumbai/New Delhi artist addresses running away from commitment on the fresh track

GROWING UP BETWEEN MUMBAI AND new Delhi, singer-songwriter Sukhnidh Kaur – who goes by her first name – felt disillusioned and unsure of what to do with her feelings. However, when she sat at the piano, things made sense. She says, "I could shut out a world that felt fundamentally hostile, and submit completely to the intoxicating experience of creating something beautiful where there once was nothing." Songwriting would turn into a tool for Sukhnidh to express her feelings. Now, she's out with her debut single, the lush pop-ballad "One Woman Band."

Sukhnidh recalls that she penned the new song on a hot summer in Mumbai while reflecting on her "mortal fear of rejection." The artist adds, "I had been staying up night after night writing music, telling myself that I don't really want anyone to listen to my songs. I claimed I simply write for myself, but the truth behind this comfortable farce was that I was terrified of people hating something I created or rejecting the one thing that makes the world make sense to me."

It was around this time that Sukhnidh also isolated herself from social interaction. "I felt I wasn't good, smart, pretty, or fun enough to justify imposing my presence on other people," she says. The singer soon grew tired of this feeling and decided to muster the courage to be seen, heard and loved. Sukhnidh adds, "[I thought] I might want this despite the terror of opening myself up for scrutiny."

Mumbai producer Rishi Thakker aka Dropped Out co-produced "One Woman Band" with Sukhnidh. The pair built the track with calming soundscapes that include cello parts, ambient electric guitars as well as an airy beat. Sukhnidh on her part delivers an emotional vocal performance that is backed by rich layers of harmonies. "Dropped Out is a collaborator you want on your side. I've learned a lot from him," says the singer.

Next, Sukhnidh plans to spend more time working on new music and keep releasing singles. She says, "It's scary, but all the great things are, right?" **DAVID BRITTO**

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

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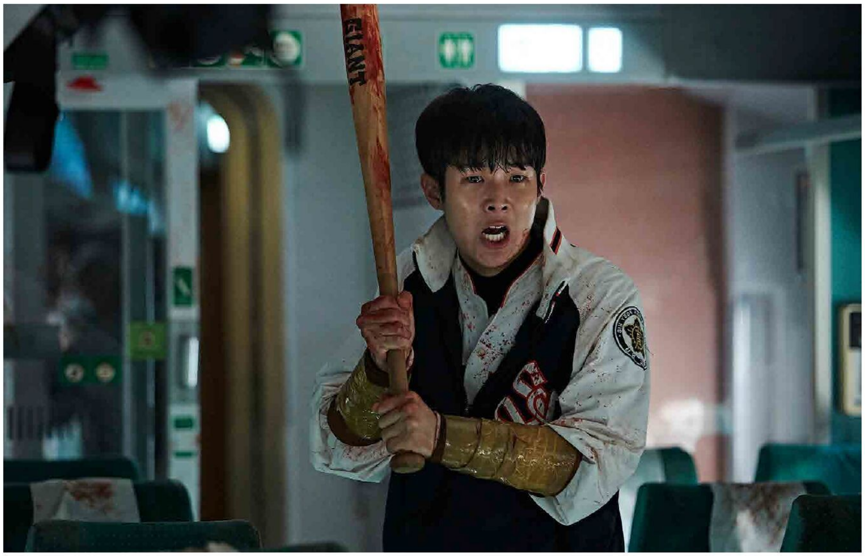
Actor You Need to Know: Choi Woo-shik

He is a natural in every role, even in tense circumstances, whether it be in an autobiographical coming-of-age story, an action horror K-zombie, or a black comedy thriller

CHOI WOO-SHIK HAS MATURED INTO AN acting maestro with top honors to his name since the Oscar-winning film *Parasite* (2019) catapulted him to worldwide fame (though his first shot at international recognition came with *Train to Busan* in 2016). He is a natural in every role, even in tense circumstances, whether it be in an autobiographical coming-of-age story, an action horror K-zombie, or a black comedy thriller. The Chungmuro actor is a prime example of a dependable and trustworthy asset in Korean entertainment who has lately blossomed more into a superb romantic hero, bringing life to an unfathomable emotional struggle of profound love in *Our Beloved Summer* (2021–2022), an intense powerhouse of a romance drama.



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With a degree in cultural studies from Chung-Ang University, Choi made his acting debut in 2011 with the period drama *The Duo*, subsequently appearing in films like *Flu* and *Secretly, Greatly* in 2013. Meanwhile, he played bit parts in television projects before landing his first lead role as Yeong-jae (a foster kid), who, as a teenager, resorts to lying to avoid being sent to his real father, in the film *Set Me Free* (2014). Choi was excellent in displaying the frailty and frustration of the character. It was clear that he could elicit the most intense emotions most innately. As a result, at the 19th Busan International Film Festival, he won the Actor of the Year award and went on to portray a brainiac hacker in the action-comedy film *Big Match* (2014), the eponymous character in the romantic comedy series *Hogu's Love* (2015), and also worked in the R-rated Hong Kong-Singaporean film *In the Room* later that year.

I recall recognizing the actor as "that guy, the baseball player from *Train to Busan*" when I first saw him in *Parasite*; I didn't know much about him then and was oblivious that by the time the credits rolled, he would leave me totally speechless. I realized that Choi is an actor—who can easily switch between scenes of playful humor and lethal severity—deftly morphing into anybody—the unique quality that may have ramped up his evolution.

If you examine his collection of work, from *Train to Busan* to *Parasite*, you'll see that the period is distinguished by his one-of-a-kind performances. Whether he played a supporting or starring role, what mattered was his commanding on-screen presence and compelling displays that stole moments. It could be his brief but noteworthy appearance as a truck driver in Bong Joon-ho's sci-fi action-adventure film *Okja* (2017), his portrayals in movies like *The Princess and the Matchmaker* (2018) and *Monstrum* (2018), or his role as an enigmatic executioner identified as the "Nobleman" in the action film *The Witch: Subversion* (2018).

He and director Bong Joon-ho collaborated once more for *Parasite*, in which Choi played Ki-woo, the son of an impoverished family that plots to work for an affluent family by invading their home and acting as competent individuals. The end credits song, "Soju One Glass" (music by Jung Jae-il), which was nominated for an Oscar Award for Best Original Song, had Choi performing in addition to his role in the film. *Parasite* is indeed a marvel, and Choi was brilliant in it. Its final stretch offers a shock of deep emotions that underpin the social satire with the most unexpected turn of events.

When Ki-woo peeks inside the Park mansion (now occupied by a different family) and sees his father's Morse code message, I thought it was a great way to highlight the father-son relationship. It hits home when he writes a letter to his father, vowing to work hard enough to save enough money to buy the house and reunite with him. The performance demonstrated Choi's knack for expressing sincerity and poignancy, all while keeping his sense of charm in check.

He is a powerhouse, embracing all genres with ease and clearly breaking the pattern by dabbling with styles and taking on fascinating projects. His range has grown more recently thanks to roles in the wildly popular drama *Our Beloved Summer* and the crime thriller *The Policeman's Lineage* (2022). In the upcoming science fiction fantasy film *Wonderland*, Choi will co-star with Bae Suzy, Jung Yu-mi, Park Bo-gum, and Tang Wei. Using artificial intelligence simulations, visitors to *Wonderland* can reconnect with people they might not see otherwise. The coordinator for this virtual realm will be portrayed by Choi. DEBASHREE DUTTA

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WHAT IS
AVAXHOME?

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'Gumiho': The Fox Spirit of K-Dramas

Gumiho is a shape-shifting, nine-tailed fabled fox that has been around for thousands of years, usually taking on a female form

ACROSS ALL CULTURES, THERE ARE mythological creatures that are solely entertaining because of how incomprehensible they are. Their impact stems from the sense of mystery that surrounds them; they are like uncharted waters for us in that they are dark, deep, and hard to fathom. And that, I reiterate, is what makes these creatures so intriguing, much like the fabled 'gumiho' from Korean folklore: an absolute flight of fancy, like a character from a pipe dream.

As in China's 'huli jing' and Japan's 'kitsune,' gumiho is the Korean equivalent of these legendary creatures. Gumiho, in layman's terms, is a shape-shifting, nine-tailed fox spirit that has been around for thousands of years, usually taking on a female form. Unlike huli jing and kitsune, which are depicted as kind, evil, or objective, gumiho is typically portrayed as a vicious, flesh-eating monster. The bloodthirsty half-fox, half-human gumiho, on the other hand, prowled cemeteries at night, digging human hearts from graves, as opposed to the benevolent gumiho, who helped people.

Such are the traits of a gumiho, about whom extensive literature has been penned in Korean lore and legends have been carried from generation to generation. Some of these legends are gathered in the *Compendium of Korean Oral Literature* and featured as characters in compelling Korean dramas. In this genre, the popular *My Girlfriend is a Gumiho* (2010) is a prime example. The drama follows Chae Dae-woong (Lee Seung-gi) who aspires to be an action hero. He visits a temple to fulfill his wish and sets free a gumiho (Shin Minah as Gu Mi-ho), imprisoned in a painting for 500 years. Dae-woong flees in horror, suffering severe injuries, but Mi-ho saves his life and begs him to stay by his side after realizing that, with his help, she might become a human.

Another myth holds that the gumiho loses its evilness after 1000 days of not killing and devouring people and after several hundred years of existence, it can assume human shape regardless of gender. In the fantasy drama *Tale of the Nine-Tailed* (2020), a gumiho gives up his position as Baekdudagan's guardian to look for his lover's reincarnation. The over 1000-year-old gumiho in question, Lee Yeon

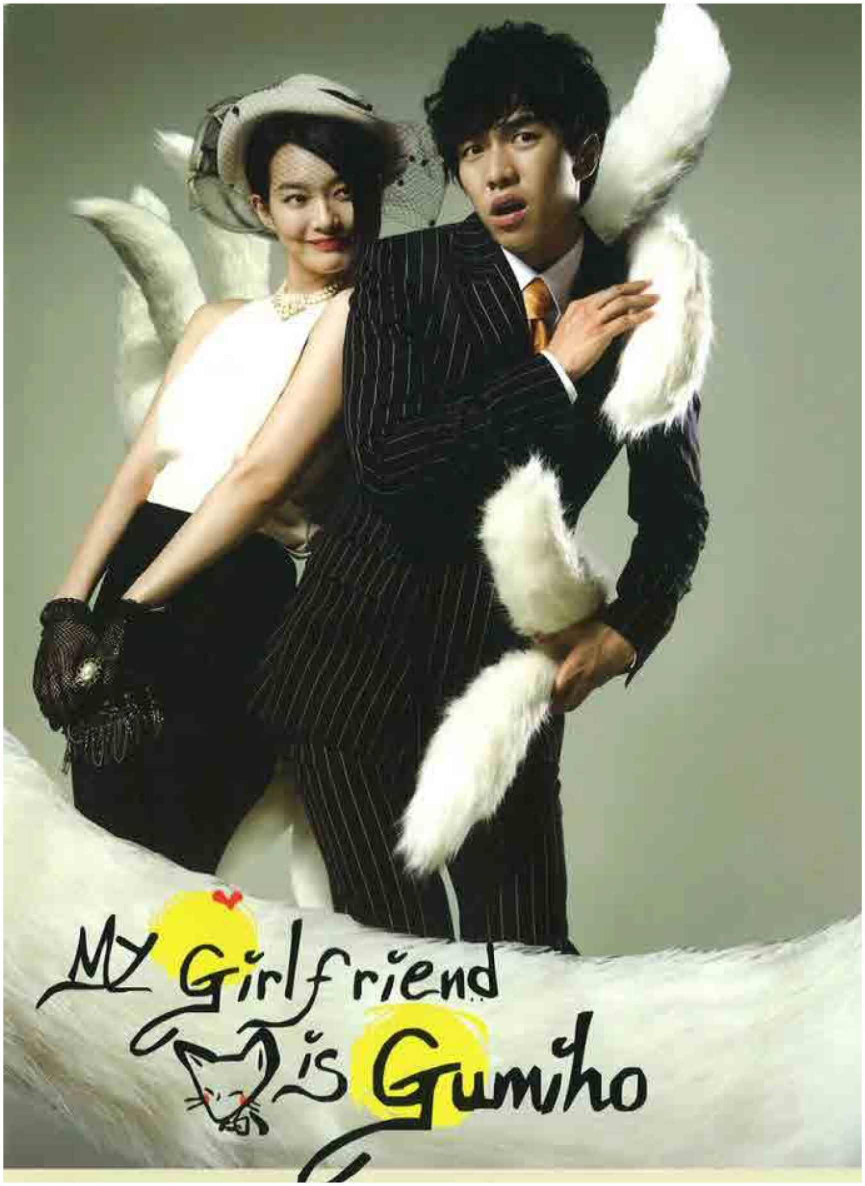
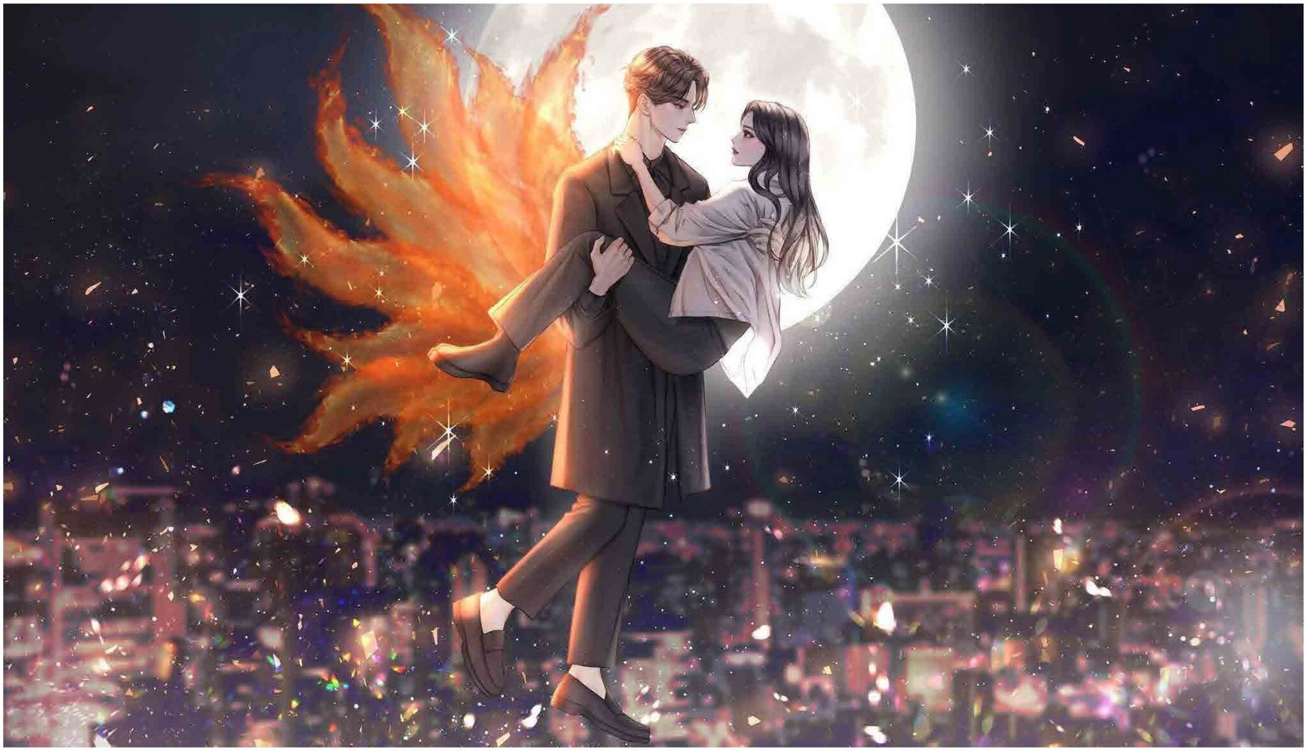
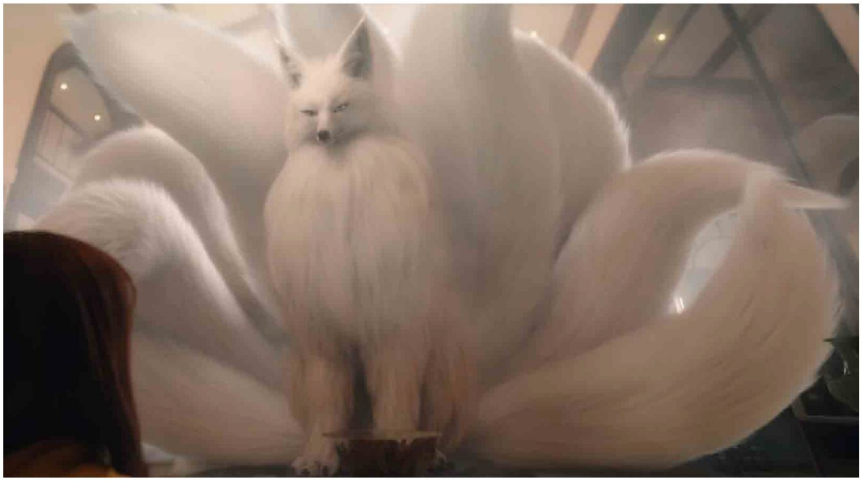


PHOTO COURTESY OF SBS; TVN





The myth holds that the gumiho loses its evilness after 1000 days of not killing and devouring people, and after several hundred years of existence, it can assume human shape regardless of gender.

(Lee Dong-wook), now lives in a city. In pursuit of eliminating supernatural beings that pose a threat to the world, he works with Taluipa (Kim Jung-nan), a representative in the Afterlife Immigration Office and the custodian of the Samdo River.

Lee Yeon is aided by his devoted subject, a veterinarian and fellow gumiho. He is sighted—by Nam Ji-ah (Jo Bo-ah), a wily and gutsy producer at TVC Station who turns out to be the reincarnation of Lee Yeon's previous lover, Yi Ah-eum (the seventh daughter of the King of Joseon)—while on a mission to seize a fox that has killed and eaten numerous human livers. In the soon-to-be-released sequel to this work, *Tale of the Nine-Tailed* 1938, Lee Yeon is unexpectedly sent back in time to the year 1938 because of the happenings that ensue in *Tale of the Nine-Tailed*.

The gumiho's unique feature, the 'yeowoo guseul,' a fox marble or bead, is thought to be endowed with wisdom that provides the gumiho with strength. By releasing the bead into someone's mouth and then drawing it out, the gumiho can absorb human energy through a passionate kiss. A reflection of this can be seen in *My Roommate is a Gumiho* (2021), a romantic comedy that narrates the gripping love story of a nine-tailed fox who wants to become a human. Shin Woo-yeo (Jang Ki-yong), to retrieve the fox bead, which has been protected by him for 999 years, is forced to live together with a vivacious college student, Lee Dam (Lee Hye-ri), who fortuitously swallowed it.

In summary, the mythical gumiho—good or bad—is surely an enigma that, depending on how it is pictured, can evoke fear or anxiousness. Other productions that have included the fabled fox spirit besides the dramas aforementioned are *Forbidden Love* (2004), *Grudge: The Revolt of Gumiho* (2010), *The Thousandth Man* (2012), and *Gu Family Book* (2013). It is worth mentioning that many cultures attach significance to the fox. In Korea, it is considered a creature of depravity; likely because of this, according to an informative piece by KBS World, North Korean cultural content places a significant emphasis on the animal's distinct characteristics. It adds that the fox commonly serves as a metaphor for capitalism, imperialism, egotists, or troublemakers in North Korean dramas and movies. As a result, whether it be literature, film, or animation, the nation avoids creating anything that can be perceived differently. DEBASHREE DUTTA

What to Expect from Kim Seon-ho's Next: 'The Childe'

Kim Seon-ho will play a mysterious nobleman in the movie, which marks his big-screen debut and his comeback after 'Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha'

PHOTO COURTESY OF SALT ENTERTAINMENT; HANCINEMA

ORIGINALLY TITLED *SAD TROPICS*, PARK Hoon-jung's next, *The Childe*, will be released this June. The Korean action-noir thriller concerns a struggling boxer—with a Korean father and a Filipino mother—who is being watched and pursued by unknown, vile individuals while visiting Korea in search of his father.

Kim Seon-ho will star as the titular Gwigongja (Nobleman) in the movie, which marks his big-screen debut and his comeback to the scene after his last, the superhit romantic comedy slice-of-life cathartic K-drama *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha* (2021).

Kim's significant stage experience contributes to his incredible authenticity; he is a rare actor who brings composure and polish to every situation. He seems natural and instinctual, even in a challenging role, and was rightfully named Gallup Korea's Television Actor of the Year for 2021. With *The Childe*, he certainly returns to the spotlight, ramping up his game.

Based on reports, Kim's character in the picture has qualities that are the antithesis of what we've come to expect from him from his previous efforts. The poster has already piqued my interest. What else have we got to look forward to? Read on.

An All-New Kim Seon-ho

eaKim has an extraordinary capacity to hold your attention, given that he portrays characters who are fascinating to learn about. Keeping in line with this, as the nobleman in *The Childe*, his presence is cloaked in mystery. Nothing is known about what motivates him to pursue Marco (the boxer, played by Kang Tae-joo).

The movie poster adds to Kim's enigma with his silhouette, sporting a dapper gentleman's appearance. He carries a marked swag while whistling and fixating on something against a dark blue skyline. The actor appears to be a dubious guy on the surface, and from what little is known about him, he will undoubtedly catch us off guard, though, just when we least expect it. I am most interested in the equation involving Marco, him, and whatever lies beneath.

A Distinctive Action-Noir Film

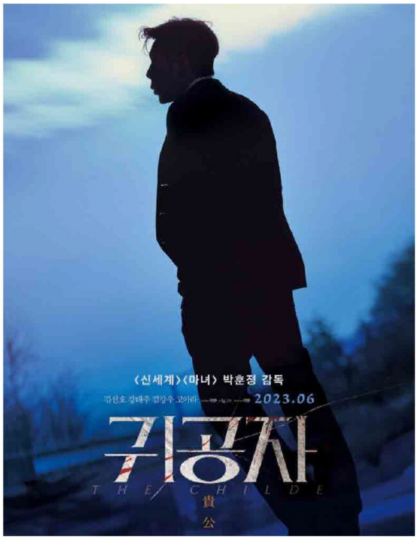
Filmmaker and screenwriter Park Hoon-jung supposedly have a soft spot for crime dramas and noir films. His creative talent is evident in his eye for quality, and his penchant for originality is unmistakable. Park, a revered name in Chungmuro, gained notoriety for penning the screenplays for Kim Jee-woon's *I Saw the Devil* (2010) and Ryoo Seung-wan's *The Unjust* (2010). He achieved both critical and commercial success with his first two films, the historical saga *The Showdown* from 2011 and the gangster epic *New World* from 2013. The 77th Venice International Film Festival hosted the global premiere of his most recent criminal drama, *Night in Paradise* (2020), which received plaudits for its use of unconventional characters in an impressively intricate plot.

7. To all intents and purposes, with *The Childe*, Park will demonstrate a meticulously constructed plot with his signature high-caliber production standards and fluid storytelling. The film's primary characters, some of whom are more morally questionable and flawed than normal, could correspond to the Korean noir film genre, but Park's distinctive approach to portraying them might make them more intriguing. And even though *The Childe* seems bleak, you might still wish to explore the soiled roads of darkness that the director is expected to create with originality and style.

An Interesting Cast

In equal measure, the movie's cast is noteworthy. It heralds the gorgeous Go Ara's return from a protracted absence. Together with Kim Kang-woo, who is most known for his appearances in the erotic thriller film *The Taste of Money* (2012) and the police procedural thriller mystery action television series, *The Missing* (2015). Kang Tae-joo in the pivotal role of Marco will certainly be a revelation. Considering it's an action-noir, can I anticipate a glimmer of romance between Kim Seon-ho and Go Ara? Let's wait and see. **DEBASHREE DUTTA**

Kim has an extraordinary capacity to hold your attention, given that he portrays characters who are fascinating to learn about. Keeping in line with this, as the nobleman in The Childe, his presence is cloaked in mystery.



ALI SMITH/"GUARDIAN"/EYEVINE/REDUX

Q&A

Billy Corgan

On the Smashing Pumpkins' new concept album, letting go of old grievances, and seeing the bright side of life

By ANDY GREENE

Few Smashing Pumpkins fans realized it at the time, but the group's 1995 double LP, *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness,* was the start of a loose storyline about a character known as Zero, who was reborn as Glass on 2000's *Machina/The Machines of God.* Two decades later, Billy Corgan is revisiting the whole saga on the triple album *Atum: A Rock Opera in Three Acts,* where the central figure — now known as Shiny — has been exiled in space. "For a while I thought this new album was never going to happen because the band's enthusiasm was suspect," Corgan says. "But the pandemic was a watershed moment for me. I thought, 'What's happening in the world, I have no control over. At least I control the world of Shiny and his friends.'"

You're trusting your fans to follow a pretty complex story with this album. Did you worry many of them wouldn't be able to do it?
It's actually hard-baked in there that most people won't follow the story. It doesn't really bother me, because it's the same way for *Mellon Collie* and *Machina.* Most people don't know what the records are really about. They're focused on their favorite drum solo or whatever. It's fine.

They can follow the story in a lot more detail on your new podcast.
I had a lot of people tell me that no one would listen. Well, that's fine, too.... If you went back in a time machine to me 30 years ago, I would be plagued by the idea that not every person was paying attention. Now, I'm almost pleasantly surprised that people pay attention. That's the icing on the cake.

How much new material are you going to play on the Pumpkins' summer tour?
We play about four or five new songs, which is a lot, when you think about it. I still hold out the dream that we'll be able to perform the entire album in the right setting, but we're not there yet.

A lot of your older songs reflect incredible pain and trauma from your childhood. What's it like emotionally to sing a song like "Disarm" every night?
I approach it more like an actor. Oftentimes, when I'm singing a song like "Disarm," I'll think of my children more so than myself. The song becomes a triumphant statement of someone who's not only survived, but is raising children who won't be traumatized like I was.

You said recently that the Pumpkins were a "pile of wasted opportunity" from one angle. What exactly did you mean by that?
Well, in my mind, the Nineties band separates into two eras. There's up until Jimmy [Chamberlin] leaves the band in '96, and then there's what happens afterwards, which is a month-to-month struggle of who's in, who's out, the decline of the music business, MTV going off of rock music.... When Jimmy left, I should have left. The band had in many ways outlived its usefulness, even to me personally. But we continued. It's like a family: You're not sure whether the love is there, but you carry on because that's the family that you know.

James Iha has been back in the band for five years. What's it meant for you to repair that relationship?
It allowed me to reembrace what was good about the band without having to always have some sort of qualification attached to it. Jimmy and I would go out and play a show circa 2008, and it would be about who wasn't there. We had people saying, "The band should not exist at all." And then you get into the weird math of "Wait, there's other bands out with only one person. We have two. Is that better?" James coming back ended all that.

Back in the day, you liked to stir the pot and almost make yourself into a villain. It seems like that's no longer the case.
I was never that person. I became that person in a reactionary way to the way I was presented. At some point, after having children, I just looked around and said, "I just don't want to be this guy anymore." Working in wrestling, I get it. We even had a president you could argue was one of the great villains of all time, right? [Donald Trump] loves playing that game. I reached a point of just being weary with it.

Your political views are hard to nail down. You are not firmly on either side of the left-right debate, right?
I was slow to recognize how hyperbolic the political atmosphere had become. Stuff I would say in '95 just didn't fly in 2005. And I was an old guy that was slow to realize you can't talk like that anymore.... I really, truly believe in democracy, and I believe that when everybody says what they need to say, we by and large, however slowly, get around to the good part.

On your new album, Shiny starts off having been scrubbed from history. Is that supposed to be a metaphor for cancel culture?
Not everything in the story is me, but my own part of the story is that I came along with a lot of innocence and a lot of guile, and I was very successful, but I was also targeted and bullied. I survived. I got my life together. I didn't kill myself. I've been sober for 20-something years. I could have quit years ago. I decided not to. I built a life that went beyond "the rat-in-a-cage guy." ... You reach a point in your own personal accomplishment where you go, "I'm good." ®

Meet Gale, Latin Pop's New It Girl

GALE IS A WHIRLWIND of energy. Within seconds of meeting her, the 30-year-old Puerto Rican singer-songwriter dives into effusive stories about where she's been traveling and what she's been listening to lately. She's happy to share some new song ideas — she'll even tell you if you have lipstick on your teeth. There's an open-book quality to Gale, who has turned heads writing for acts like Juanes and Christina Aguilera. After scoring hits and a Latin Grammy, she's ready to drop her debut album, *Lo Que No Te Dije*, this spring. It's a glowing LP that highlights her knack for pop melodies and confessional lyricism. "I love opening a portal to vulnerability," she says. "I want to be a badass bitch, but I want to be an honest, vulnerable, badass bitch." JULYSSA LOPEZ

10-SECOND BIO

HOMETOWN
Arecibo, Puerto Rico

EMOTIONS
She sees her LP as a tribute to the experiences that have brought her here: "Even the broken, sad feelings make me grateful."

HAIR AND MAKEUP BY NATALIA FERNANDEZ. STYLING BY SARAH AKIBA. DRESS BY MDCR. JEWELRY: CASA DE FRANCESKA/AKIBA ANTIQUES.

PHOTOGRAPH BY Alfonso Duran

Reviews

Music

KESHA FINDS A NEW FREEDOM

Amid ongoing legal struggles, the singer's fifth LP is some of her most daring music yet

By BRITTANY SPANOS

Kesha
Gag Order
RCA

For almost a decade, Kesha's career and life have been in a state of purgatory as she's been locked in a legal battle that has at times left her with a precarious future. On the two albums she released in the midst of endless court hearings, she put up an empowered front, searching for hope in the face of uncertainty.

Gag Order — a brilliant name for her latest album — says "screw that." On her fifth LP, Kesha is tired, angry, and vicious. There's a lot she still can't say, but she unspools as much of her feelings as she can across 13 scorched-earth tracks that present an artist pulling herself back up from the brink of madness.

The most striking element of Kesha's latest is the sound; working with producer

ILLUSTRATION BY
Carla Fuentes

KESHA

Rick Rubin, she has found a psychedelic middle ground between the sleazy synths of her 2012 breakthrough, *Warrior,* and the rootsy and Southern rock of her past two, 2017's *Rainbow* and 2020's *High Road.* The songs oscillate between introspective, ambient folk tunes and bold, grunge-y electro-clash.

Lyrically, *Gag Order* is a study in being open about being irreparably changed by trauma. Kesha still hopes for hope itself, but more often, she's allowing herself to be honest about the damage done to her mental health, career, and relationships by years of battling her old producer Dr. Luke, whom she accused of sexual and emotional abuse and whose label she is still technically signed to.

"Something to Believe In" opens the LP like a solemn prayer: "I sit and watch the pieces fall/I don't know who I am at all," she offers, before admitting, "You never notice you need something to believe in." The spare "Living in My Head" is a gorgeous tapestry of anxiety and self-loathing, with the singer trying to free herself from the chaos in her mind. Following that, she slips down a rabbit hole: "This is where you fuckers pushed me/Don't be surprised if shit gets ugly," she sings on "Fine Line." As it progresses, she walks a fine line between "genius and crazy." On "Only Love Can Save Us Now," she straddles the tension between justice and pettiness: "I'm gettin' sued 'cause my mom has been tweetin'/Don't fucking tell me that I'm dealing with reason."

There's a shocking amount of softness from Kesha here, with songs like "Too Far Gone" pulsing like a funeral march for the girl she used to be. "All I Need Is You" reaches out to someone — or everyone — to lift her up. Carrying the album is that same silly humor that always made Kesha a pop star cut from an animal-print-patterned cloth of her own. On "The Drama," she reflects, "In the next life I wanna come back as a house cat," for the final minute and a half.

She may never find the rainbow she once sang about, but that doesn't mean she isn't radically advocating for her own happy ending. The album even ends with "Happy," a weary but lovely ballad dedicated to life not turning out the way you hope. As she sings on that song, she's gotta laugh so she doesn't die. Even that is its own kind of victory. ®

JESSIE WARE'S DANCE FEVER

The U.K. singer offers a euphoric survey of disco and house music By JON FREEMAN

HEAR THIS

Jessie Ware

That! Feels Good!

INTERSCOPE

Jessie Ware's 2020 release, *What's Your Pleasure?,* was one of the early pandemic's great musical revelations — a pop album that successfully brought the movement, yearning, and euphoria of the dance club into everyone's homes. It was a perfect setting for the British singer-songwriter's voice, luxurious and sophisticated but still highly accessible.

Ware's follow-up to that achievement, titled *That! Feels Good!,* further zeroes in on the many pleasures of dance music. Bodies and bodily sensations are emphasized, while inhibitions are shaken off in pursuit of personal and communal ecstasy. It's also brighter and funkier than its predecessor, full of big brass and grooves that amplify the feeling of joy.

The title track — co-penned by Ware — opens with an orgy of breathy voices uttering the title phrase before transforming into a limber disco-funk jam somewhere between Prince and Stevie Wonder. "Just remember: Pleasure is a right," Ware sings.

That's a recurring theme throughout the album. On the single "Free Yourself," Ware flips into disco-diva mode with an anthem of sexual liberation for queer and straight people alike. "Free yourself, keep on moving up that mountaintop/Why don't you please yourself?" she sings. She seems to run the entire length of her considerable vocal range, belting the choruses and nodding to Donna Summer's eternal "I Feel Love" as the song shifts from piano-driven disco to piano-driven house and then back again for its final vamp.

Sometimes Ware just embraces the feeling of being unabashedly horny. "Freak Me Now" opens with some porn-worthy moaning before turning into sticky electro-funk. On "Shake the Bottle," she offers a sly instruction manual on how to get her off. And in the velvety disco tune "These Lips," she describes a sensation of erotic intrigue: "These two lips could do so much more," she purrs.

It's certainly not overlong at 10 tracks, but *That! Feels Good!* does seem front-loaded with its punchiest tunes. Still, there are moments in the back half that really work, like the lithe, airy "These Lips" and the body-positive "Beautiful People," which sounds like smoothed-out LCD Soundsystem.

The LP is at its best when it pinpoints the connection between body and emotion. "Begin Again" sounds like something out of the classic Salsoul catalog, with lush, choral melodies cascading through the groove. "Why does all the purest love get filtered through machines?" Ware wonders. It's a plea for the kind of community only a dance floor can provide. ®

BREAKING

Joy Oladokun's Helpful Anthems

JOY OLADOKUN'S second major-label LP is probably the only record this year that'll feature Houston rapper Maxo Kream, Chris Stapleton, and jam-band Manchester Orchestra. A Black queer artist, this singer-songwriter makes what she calls "helpful anthems," with real mass reach. *Proof of Life* swerves from the existential toughness and distorted guitars of "We're All Gonna Die" to "Changes," a roots-country tune that references the L.A. riots, to "Revolution," which features Kream and evokes Eighties Afropop. Oladokun graciously flows this diverse mix together, creating an open-ended and satisfying whole. JON DOLAN

FROM TOP: JACK GRANGE; BRIAN HIGBEE

COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

SINGER-SONGWRITER UTSAVI JHA OPENS UP ABOUT HER FILM DEBUT IN 'GULMOHAR'

THE MUMBAI ARTIST PLAYS THE ROLE OF MUSICIAN AMRITA BATRA ON THE DISNEY+ HOTSTAR ORIGINAL

By DAVID BRITTO

> “This was one of the most enriching, stirring, teachable and memorable experiences of my life.”

SUPRIYA KANTAK/DISNEY+ HOTSTAR

Mumbai-based singer-songwriter Utsavi Jha has now found herself behind the screen, not for a music video, but for the recently released Disney+ Hotstar original family-drama movie *Gulmohar*. For her film debut, Jha took on the role of singer-songwriter Amrita Batra. She’s even contributed to the film’s soundtrack by singing on the piano-aided “Woh Ghar,” composed by Siddharth Khosla.

In this interview with *Rolling Stone India*, Jha talks about how she got the role in the film, what she learned from the whole process, sharing screen space with legends such as Sharmila Tagore and Manoj Bajpayee, and more. Read excerpts:

How did you bag this role?

My director Rahul Chitella was very keenly involved in casting and was on the lookout for a singer and songwriter to essay the role of Amrita. I’m grateful that Rahul and Dilip sir, our casting director, decided to put their trust in me to act in this special movie. Special mention and thanks to NS Padmanabhan sir from Spotify India who recommended me, and [guitarist-composer] Ehsaan Noorani sir who also advised me in the process. I went through almost five to six rounds of auditions before they locked me as Amrita. So, I’d say being a singer and songwriter helped but I also had to audition and train to get the role.

What was it like to be part of this film?

This was one of the most enriching, stirring, teachable and memorable experiences of my life. It’s hard to articulate since this experience was so emotionally arousing for me. Since I’m curious and like to learn new things, I trained myself to be my most open and vulnerable self to experience everything in the 45 days of shooting. That’s why I was so affected by everything and everyone in the process – in a good way. I’d go on set every day just to watch other actors shoot their scenes because there was something to learn from everything. It opened my eyes to several learnings – that acting is a

> “I’ve always stayed open in life, which is why I’ve gotten to do what I have.”

challenging profession and it takes real skills and dedication to pursue it; that each department is equally integral in the process, and they all deserve just as much respect as actors. I met so many good-hearted and talented people who I am in awe of and luckily even friends with. With regards to the cast, it’s still unreal how I got to act and spend time with legends of the Indian film industry. I got to act alongside Sharmila Tagore ma’am. What a lady – so charming, witty, intelligent, skilled and most of all, kind and generous! I learned a lot from her. She made me feel so comfortable and encouraged. She told me on our first day how we were all on the same team, working towards the same vision. So, I shouldn’t be nervous, that I’ve got this and that I should treat her as my dadi to feel more comfortable during our scenes. What humility! Rahul told me to simply surrender and trust his vision and the character, which was very helpful for an over-thinker like me. Rahul is a visionary and an impeccable writer and director who created a beautiful world with all the love and consideration for us. He embraced me as I came and made the journey a smooth one. I’ll forever be grateful to him for this opportunity and for everything he’s done for me. Manoj Bajpayee sir made us feel so welcome and at home. He’d say how acting is his safe space and that even if he’d had a bad day, he’d never doubt the craft because it never fails him. That put so much into perspective for me for my art. Not just good professionals, they’re all such wonderful people! I loved how our DOP Eeshit Narain captured us. One year down the line, I still can’t believe I got to live this experience because I didn’t see it coming.

Did you have to undergo any training and what was the whole experience like overall?

Yes, I did! Puja Sarup, a fantastic acting coach and actor, conducted my acting workshops. In many ways, she became my mental support for any acting-related hiccups during the course of the shoot. She knew the insecurities and troubles that a new actor may face and was always there to talk me through them. I remember being dejected with my performance in a scene on one of the initial shoot days. I went back to my hotel, cried a lot, skipped dinner, skipped breakfast and lunch the next day too. I wasn't able to snap out of the disappointment I was feeling with myself because I like to do my best. I called Puja to learn how to deal with it so I could do the rest of the scenes better and with a healthier mindset. That conversation with her was so helpful! I ended up shooting the most creatively satisfying scene that day. In the six to seven sessions that I did with her in person and over Zoom, she didn't teach me how to act. Rather, she taught me how to think, listen and approach feelings and situations.

What can you tell me about your character in the film?
I play Amrita Batra, who is a third-generation member of the Batra family, and a singer and songwriter. She is bubbly, strong-headed, decisive with a creative bend of mind. Lost in her thoughts, Amrita looks at her world through her songs. Despite being outspoken, she is still very vulnerable, emotional and connected to her family. The audience gets to savor the silences and emotions through Amrita. She has a close bond with her grandmother [Sharmila Tagore ma'am] who is her confidante and guide in a way. In the movie, each of the family members is going through a hard time. Hence, we see Amrita as rebellious, troubled and an avoider. She is grappling with her sexual orientation.

Amrita's personality and profession are similar to mine. So, I felt a deep connection to her while shooting and found the experience very immersive. I was able to harness my natural self to empathize with all that Amrita was feeling. Playing such a character is challenging because it could appear lacking depth if not handled well or might seem preachy. I only wanted my portrayal to seem real and honest. By the end, I was very comfortable as Amrita and tried my best to play it with utmost honesty. I hope I've succeeded.

What can you tell me about the song you sang as part of the film?
'Woh Ghar' is such a melodic, gorgeous song with beautiful meaning and context attached. I remember being on set one day with my director, Rahul, trying to crack its lyrics. We were able to get some words and concepts. However, it was finally written beautifully by Shelle ji. What a fun, memorable day that was! I had goosebumps the first time I heard 'Woh Ghar!' And then to see it in the movie supporting such crucial climax scenes is simply unbelievable. It is composed by Siddharth Khosla, who I have been a fan of. I got to work with an incredible team consisting of Kanishk Seth, Alan Demos and Rahul himself, who was immersed in the music part of the movie. We recorded the song towards the end of the shoot at Ferris Wheel Studio in Delhi. Kanishk Seth, the movie's music supervisor, accompanied me and we had a great time. And what's wild is that I am on the same album as Kavita Seth ma'am and Talat Aziz sir, who are legends and wonderful people.

Is acting something that you plan on doing more?
I've always stayed open in life, which is why I've gotten to do what I have. So, I only want to stay open by not binding myself with any parameters. I am very moved by the kind of love my singing and songs are receiving – the singer in me is immensely satisfied. However, what's encouraging is how much my portrayal of Amrita is being appreciated. I had zero expectations since this was my debut. But I truly enjoyed the craft of acting and that is a good sign for me to be open to acting further. Manoj Bajpayee sir advised me: work double time and get work done if you have two careers, you're young, you can do it. That has fueled me. If acting has to work out for me, I'm ready to hustle and put in the hours... As Param, a character in Gulmohar, says, 'In life, we need only two things – hope and love.'

SUPRIYA KANTAK/DISNEY+ HOTSTAR

What's next for you, be it music or acting?
Well, the movie has recently come out so I'm enjoying the love and appreciation it is receiving. I'm also happy that I took this challenge upon myself, fighting off fears, because I would've been at a loss had I not done this film. I am staying open and happy to see where life takes me, and see what my acting career turns out to be like. But as always, I'm putting in the work from my end as that should never stop. In terms of singing, I am hopeful that this movie takes my voice and my music to more people, and I get to lend my voice to another movie/project soon! Independently, I am working on some Hindi and English songs. I'm also saving up to create some music videos. But I want to continue creating a body of work and writing more, start collaborating and hopefully do more commercial work with regards to writing and composing for other people and brands. ®

COVER STORY: The Extraordinary Story Of IKKA

How New Delhi rapper Ankit Singh Patyal built a hip-hop legacy with versatile talent, hustle and collaboration

By DAVID BRITTO

Photographer PRASHIN JAGGER
Art Director TANVI SHAH
Fashion Editor NEELANGANA VASUDEVA
Art Assistant SIDDHI CHAVAN
Make-up and Hair by HARDEEP ARORA AND RUKHSANA MEMON

KNIT BY **DIESEL**

> "For me, success is that my family is happy [and] I can provide them with all the necessities in life."

Although rapper Ankit Singh Patyal aka IKKA has added heat to Bollywood tracks and put out albums via major music labels – 2022's sophomore album *Nishu* includes a star-studded cast of collaborators – it didn't always come this easy for him. The artist says, "I'm from a middle-class family; I had big dreams and throughout my childhood, there has been a rollercoaster ride with a lot of highs and lows."

With a host of singles that share space with the likes of Diljit Dosanjh, Badshah, Raftaar, MC Stan and DIVINE, IKKA put out his 2020 album, /, via Mass Appeal India, a part of Universal Music Group. In a previous interview with *Rolling Stone India*, he said, "While growing up, I was introduced to hip-hop and had a chance to listen to many albums by artists such as Nas, Eminem, Jay-Z, 50 Cent, etc. Because of this, over time, I understood the structure of an album in my mind and it became really easy for me to develop my debut hip-hop album /."

> "Now, the competition is so heavy that we need to put in extra effort, which is actually good in a way as it brings out the best in you."

With IKKA now on his way to achieving further success and cementing his position as one of the top rappers in India, we caught up with him to discuss what he has in store in the coming year, his Jamnapar legacy, what success means to him and more. Read below:

This phase of your career seems to be IKKA 2.0 where you've built and achieved a lot of your wishes and dream projects, and are now scaling up. What does 2023 mean to you?

This change was required in my career because the competition is tough and growing. New artists are really performing well. When we started our careers in hip-hop, at the time, the competition wasn't that much. Now, the competition is so heavy that we need to put in extra effort, which is actually good in a way as it brings out the best in you. Gradually dreams are coming true, and I am thankful to the almighty who blessed me with this talent. 2023 is special to me as there are a lot of opportunities, I have a great team and a lot more music is coming your way.

Last year's album Nishu and your 2020 debut album I show faces of you that range from emotional to powerful and someone who loves his roots. What is the real story of Ikka? What is the real sound of Ikka?

I come from a middle-class family; I had big dreams and throughout my childhood, there has been a rollercoaster ride with a lot of highs and lows. *I* and *Nishu* present my mindset and lifestyle. *I* am versatile since I had the opportunity to be and work with a lot of versatile artists. And specifically, I am not afraid or hesitant to explore new sounds and genres in music.

OUTFIT BY **LINE OUT LINE**

OUTFIT BY **HOPHEAD**
JEWELLERY BY **DRIP**
PROJECT BY METAMAN
PRADA
PRADA
HOPHEAD

“The most challenging goals for me are to create better music over and over again.”

You speak a lot about your Jamnapaar legacy (a reference to the areas east of the Yamuna River from New Delhi). When you look back, do you see yourself as an indomitable fighter or someone who didn’t chase the same old symbols of success?
Jamnapaar is and will always be very close to my heart. I was raised in Jamnapaar, I had made my best friends there, I read comics, learned art, heard about hip-hop there first and eventually became a rapper. There has always been a fighter in me. I’ve always believed in achieving big things and being different in life. From class four in my school, my vision and passion has always been on point.

What does success look like? What are the biggest traits of successful artists?
For me, success is that my family is happy. I can provide them with all the necessities in life. I am sufficient enough to fulfill my responsibilities towards my family. The biggest trait of a successful artist are his habits. He could be creatively sound but until and unless his lifestyle, mindset, etc, are not on point, then he can never achieve what he could have through his art.

Ever since you’ve been involved with music, what are some moments that stand out for you?
A few moments related to my musical journey that stand out for me are the first time I was introduced to hip-hop at my home, met Lil Golu and then Raftaar, first studio session with Honey Singh, when I wrote the first song for Diljit Dosanjh [“Main Fan Bhagat Singh Da”], when I did my first Bollywood track and when due to music, I could travel half the world, apart from many more incidents.

“God has been kind and I’m blessed enough to think I’ve never been misunderstood or misrepresented as of now in the music industry.”

Which artists are you currently listening to at the moment?
A lot of them, especially Drake, Migos, Seedhe Maut, Rema, Wstrn, Kurupt, 21 Savage and more.

What releases are you working on?
I’m working on so many things at the moment. A lot of collaborations, duets, Bollywood tracks, singles, album, my first EP, etc.

Who has been a collaborator of yours from whom you have learned a lot?
I have learned a lot from Diljit Dosanjh *paaji*. My melodies have gotten stronger after staying and working with him.

Do you feel like you’re ever misunderstood or misrepresented in the music industry?
God has been kind and I’m blessed enough to think I’ve never been misunderstood or misrepresented as of now in the music industry.

What are the most challenging goals for you musically?
The most challenging goals for me are to create better music over and over again, try my best to refresh my sound, and bring in new topics.

What do you think is your biggest ace, your biggest ikka?
My family, my friends and my music.

Your advice to people starting out in the industry...
Have faith in yourself, and try to realize and have the knowledge to differentiate between good and not-so-good music. Stay with a circle which is like you or more creative than you. Keep a check on your habits and work hard.

SHREYA JAIN: 'YOU CAN'T EXPECT YOURSELF TO WRITE GOOD MUSIC ON YOUR FIRST DAY'

THE MUMBAI-BASED SINGER-SONGWRITER RECENTLY RELEASED HER LATEST TRACK 'YEAH YEAH' AND WAS ALSO PART OF THE CAST FOR 'DISCO DANCER – THE MUSICAL' THIS PAST APRIL

By **David Britto**

FOTILO FELLER

When we catch up with Nagpur-bred and Mumbai-based singer-songwriter Shreya Jain, she's just finished rehearsals for the recently concluded *Disco Dancer – The Musical* at the city-based NSCI Dome. Not one to be bogged down with tiredness, Jain is at her bubbly best as she plays us some of her unreleased music at her home studio. The artist – whose streaming numbers for her songs are through the roof – kicked off 2023 with two singles, "Tera Mera Aasmaan" and "Yeah Yeah," and she talks to *Rolling Stone India* about how she started out, getting into songwriting, her own music and more.

What do you recall from your early years growing up in Nagpur and getting into music?

I grew up in an Indian classical background. My father is a classical vocalist. My sister is also a trained classical singer. I was a little scared because I grew up seeing my father and my sister hustle. This field is where everybody has to hustle. I saw a lot of struggle that my father and my sister had to go through and then I decided I didn't want to do music. So I ended up doing my graduation in Interiors.

I started doing small gigs performing at weddings or clubs or colleges in Nagpur. When I was around 19 I started doing shows and I still remember for the first time I performed for 500 and I was so happy that I got paid 500 and then I started saving that money because I met with an accident a few years earlier and was in the ICU for 10 days. Because of the accident, we had to sell our car and I always had that guilt. When I started earning from shows, I started saving the money and after a year and two, I was able to pay the down payment for a car and I gifted my dad a car. I think when I started doing more shows, I started loving the energy. The stage became my home. That's when I realized my passion and I was in my third year, and I told my dad I want to do music full-time. I had dropped out of college, so I had the entire year. I didn't have a YouTube channel and started learning how to make videos. I started uploading covers. I also met a few music producers who were ready to collaborate with me. They were also in their growing phase, and everybody wanted to create content and I was fortunate enough that I met supportive people that they were ready to do it without any fee. My YouTube went from zero to 3,00,000 subscribers within the year because we'd upload every week. After an internship in Pune, I got back to Nagpur and continued with my YouTube channel and started writing my songs. I think once my graduation was done, the next day I shifted to Mumbai.

When did songwriting take precedence for you?

I was doing it anyway but I think I wasn't writing anything good. When you start writing, you just feel every song that you're writing is bad. You don't have that confidence in yourself. I co-composed a few songs and I think that gave me a little bit of confidence that they are good to go out. Unfortunately, the pandemic happened and had to shift back. The pandemic was the time when I started producing music. I knew how to record myself. I never knew how to produce, and I think that was the time when I think financially everybody was not in a good situation and I didn't want to stop uploading covers. I didn't want to stop my social media. So, I was like, it's better if I learn something new. I think I learned music production and I practiced songwriting as much as I could. I wrote about 20-30 songs. I came back to Mumbai after the pandemic and I got to work on a film called *Attack*. I worked as a Pro Tools operator on the film and I also made my film debut with three songs.

> **A lot of singers who want to start with songwriting are very scared that they won't write anything good, but I that's the beginning."**

How do you find working in Bollywood as compared to your own indie stuff?

The difference I think is you're a free bird. You are not bound to do something. You can just feel something and write about it. I think it's definitely a better feeling altogether being a musician.

After the completion of the film, I felt that I'm not doing what I'm supposed to. I decided that I want to go back to my songwriting. I had to push myself harder because I took a long gap. Right after the film, I shifted to a new house, got my studio done and started writing music. I think it took me three months of writing every day, and then I made something that I really liked. I made 30 or 40 songs and then I was like 'now I'm going to release.' Since then it's been

five months, every 40 or 45 days I'm releasing my independent music.

Do you have a particular process when you're writing songs?
It differs. Most of the time the melody just comes to me. I let the melodies come to me when I am in an autorickshaw or maybe when I am taking a shower or when I'm just cooking or anything. I let the melody come to me and I record it. Sometimes I just play a loop and then the melody comes to me. I really like to compose with samples sometimes. Also, I'll just play keys and some melody will come to me, so it's different for different sounds.

Tell us about your new song "Yeah Yeah"?
We all listen to a lot of romantic songs and romantic songs are mostly about a girl and a boy. There are so many people in our lives and they are so important, like our sister, our brother, our best friends, and our parents. I think this is a song that you can dedicate to any person. So the song says that no matter what you say, I'm there for you. And no matter if you're wrong, we'll just fix it together and we'll just figure out a way to get out of it. Irrespective if that person is your girlfriend or boyfriend. I think there are so many people who are just single, this song is an ode to them.

You've also been part of *Disco Dancer – The Musical*, what can you tell us about that?
I am so happy that I'm a part of something which is so rare now. I'm playing the female character in it where I'm singing, dancing and acting. It's a new experience for me.

We heard some of your unreleased songs earlier, what's the plan with those tracks?
I am working on an album. There's an electronic Indian classical album that's happening and I'm planning for another album with my father, which I really wanted to do for a very long time. I think that was the reason I started music. I started producing music because I was like, I wanted to do it for my father. I want to give something to him because he has given me a lot. I think because of him I'm doing music.

Do you have any advice for people in a similar position as you starting out?
I think a lot of singers who want to start with songwriting are very scared that they won't write anything good, but I think that's the beginning. You can't expect yourself to write good music on your first day. You have to fall in love with the process as well because it takes time. It took me time and I think songwriting also needs a lot of practice, exactly like learning any instrument or singing. So, I just want to tell all aspiring singer-songwriters to not give up on the process, so just keep writing songs every day. Even if you write songs for 30 or 40 days, just don't stop it. If you're listening to good music, I think you will know how to judge your own music. So that's the most important, listening to good music is really important. Ⓡ

NAKUL CHUGH

Enter Shikari Deliver a 'Kiss For The Whole World' on Spirited New Album

The U.K. electronic/rock and metal band's vocalist Rou Reynolds talks about songs from the record, the pandemic and India

BY ANURAG TAGAT

For all the trepidation thoughts that came out in music during the worst years of the pandemic, it was only apt that there were going to be bright, euphoric calls to happiness and being openhearted once things got better. U.K. act Enter Shikari's new album *A Kiss for the Whole World* is squarely in that latter category, if you couldn't already tell from the title alone.

Brandishing their honed style of electronic meets hardcore and rock, Enter Shikari's seventh album has trademark warmth ("We'll be dancing on the frontline/To symphony number 9" as Reynolds sings on the title track), sharp barbs ("She looked busy/Scrolling herself to death" on "Dead Wood") and a few shattering realizations ("Disaster ain't pre-determined/Any more than love and learning" on "It Hurts") as well.

Beyond that, there are unmissable references weaved into the lyrics that reference their previous albums, from the breakout *Take To the Skies* from 2007 to 2017 pop-leaning full-length *The Spark* and *Nothing Is True & Everything Is Possible* from 2020. Sonically, the hardcore breakdowns and punk energy is very much a part of Enter Shikari's latest, alongside glitchy production, bright synths as well as squelchy sub-bass that can make clubs quake.

With the release of *A Kiss for the Whole World*, the band – Reynolds, drummer Rob Rolfe, bassist Chris Batten and guitarist Rory Clewlow – have a chance to set things right considering *Nothing Is True & Everything Is Possible* was promoted in a wholly non-traditional way thanks to the restricted movement. "You put your heart and soul into an album, and then you can't promote it, you can't tour it, you can't do anything. You can't share it with people live. So yeah, it was just a very strange experience," Reynolds says.

He goes on to admit that Enter Shikari "was just dead as far as we were concerned" at one point. The vocalist had gone a year and a half without writing or making any music until they began working on what became the new album. In an interview with *Rolling Stone India*, Reynolds talks about how they navigated the period of uncertainty even after resuming live shows, the themes of *A Kiss for the Whole World* and India. Excerpts:

Everyone seems better now knowing that the pandemic couldn't stop things for too long. Was it a relief at how quickly things could turn back around but you still wonder, at what cost?

Rou Reynolds: That whole period was just a cocktail of emotions, as there was so much happening. I ended up basically not writing any music for a year and a half, which is something that's never happened to me before, ever. I've written music constantly since I was, like, nine.

And I've kind of retrospectively realized that was because I didn't have the experience of live music, I didn't have the connection with people. I didn't have that sense of purpose and the cyclical energy that you get when you're playing music and meeting people. So that made the whole period very strange for me.

There was a lot of soul searching for me for that period, trying to work out who I am outside of the band and everything. At the time, it didn't seem like it was going to be rectified or that we were going to find solutions quickly. It was just like this disconcerting, disorientating time.

HOTEL GRACERY

LUKASZ PALKA

ORIENTAL LOUNGE
SHINJUKU
5F
B1
DiningBar
Presso
CAT

> “*I think the way we look at failure is actually quite debilitating, whereas really, it’s the only proper way we learn," says Reynolds.”*

But yeah, obviously, when we started playing shows again, there were so many different emotions, because we didn’t want to rush back to things, because we wanted everyone to be safe. We wanted everything to work as well as it could. There was a lot of talk about things going back to normal. We don’t really want things to go back to normal in terms of like, economics or climate change… we want action, we want progress. This was a great opportunity to take a big step forward. But of course, we haven’t seen much progress, unfortunately. So yeah, it was a very strange time, lots of different emotions.

***A Kiss for the Whole World* has been called a happier album in some ways, but does that mean it’s not as socially and politically conscious with its lyrics as previous records? Once you’ve set a standard, people might ask why you’re either addressing or not addressing certain topics in your songs?**
I think even the stuff that is our most personal in terms of my lyrics is socially conscious because it says wider things about society. So for instance, even *The Spark* – which everyone says is the album that was all about personal things – uses my experience, my personal experience, to say bigger things about the world.

That album was all about vulnerability, and how we have tried to convince ourselves that we aren’t fragile creatures, when we are fragile creatures. You have all different animals that can do amazing things within 30 minutes of being born. Giraffes are up and running within like an hour; turtles are making their own way to the sea to go off. There’s all sorts of incredible ways that animals are very resilient, and very strong, straight away. We can’t even sit up! Our head has to be held… we’re very fragile creatures. And psychologically, that’s the case too.

But unfortunately, we’ve been sort of told – especially here in Britain, where we have the hangover from the Victorian period – you have to act a certain way, and men must be strong, and it’s so stupid, really, and so debilitating. So even that album basically explains why we have people like Donald Trump in the world, because that is a man who’s been told from his childhood that he cannot be fragile. Psychologically, he’s completely fucked up from it and he’s become this incredibly nasty person, because he’s just fragile. It’s just really sad.

Even the stuff that doesn’t seem overtly political, I think is political. With this album, there’s a bit of everything. There’s a lot of soul searching, there’s a lot of trying to work out who I am. But then, there’s the stuff like “It Hurts,” which talks about failure, and how I think we should reframe failure in society. I think the way we look at failure is actually quite debilitating, and not helpful at all. We try to avoid it, by any means necessary, we ridicule it. Whereas really, it’s the only proper way we learn. Maybe we shouldn’t not celebrate it, but it should be encouraged. If you’re failing, it means you’re trying something new.

One of the main reasons our society isn’t progressing is we’re not being bold enough. We’re not trying new things. We’re just kind of accepting that, ‘Oh, okay. We have capitalism. Oh, that must be the best system there is because all the other ones we’ve tried to failed.’ And we always compare our economic system to the ones that we have already whereas in fact, could we not just use our imagination, like we have all this amazing technology and all these ways we’re progressing in philosophy and sociology. Yet, we still can’t come up with new systems.

I think embracing failure and reframing it as something that is natural, something that is pivotal to our progress, something that is fruitful as well… that’s a really important thing. There are other tracks that are about power and powerlessness, they’re sort of political, I suppose. There’s little bits and pieces.

Enter Shikari have had a signature sound but I think when you started out, a few others were trying to do this too. What did you think of the “competition” back then?
I think I was just usually just inspired by it. We often felt a little bit lonely in terms of how the music we were making and how fearless it was, bringing these different genres together. For us, it was completely natural, because I grew up amongst different lots of different types of music. It wasn’t like this formulated, planned thing to make music that included these different genres. And that’s just how it came out that. I absorbed influences, and then it came out like that. So it was really nice when there were other artists and bands who were pushing things forward and trying out different collections of different sounds and different instrumentation. It was just emboldening when that happened.

Enter Shikari has come to South East Asia and nearby India before. Have there been any offers to play in India in the past? What have you heard about things out here?
India seems to be the most… we’ve had the most bad luck with getting to India. I think we’ve had two or maybe even three possibilities, like festival offers, and then it just hasn’t worked out. Or in terms of routing where we’re like, ‘We’ll try and route India in here.’ But it hasn’t worked out. It’s definitely somewhere that we would love to come.

Our drummer, particularly – Rob. It’s his own personal challenge, really, to get us to play India. He loves it so much. We would love to. We’ve had some good luck with South America recently, you know, places that we’ve never played before. We played Mexico City once, but now, I think we’re finally going to play some new places. And I think that’s the same across the world, really. And hopefully getting into Asia and getting into India. That would make our lives if we could have those experiences. ®

Last Word

Julia Louis-Dreyfus

The actress on smoking weed, staying married, and bitching with Larry David

Your new movie, *You Hurt My Feelings,* centers on a novelist having a crisis of confidence after she overhears a scathing critique by her husband. Is there a piece of negative criticism that's stuck with you?
I got a bad review very, very early on in my career from [TV critic] Tom Shales in *The Washington Post,* and it was particularly stinging to me because my family lived in Washington, D.C., and I spent half of my childhood in D.C. It was for *Saturday Night Live.* And you know what? He wasn't wrong.

> *Louis-Dreyfus' latest movie, 'You Hurt My Feelings,' is out May 26.*

Despite their big argument in the film, your character, Beth, and her husband seem to have a healthy relationship. You've been married for 36 years. What's the secret to a lasting union?
I think there's an element of luck involved. You have to, in my case, marry the right guy. People ask me this and I don't really know what to say! I just really enjoy his company. I like to have life adventures with him, and I don't know what I'd do without him. I have no advice there, just: Good luck! That's my advice.

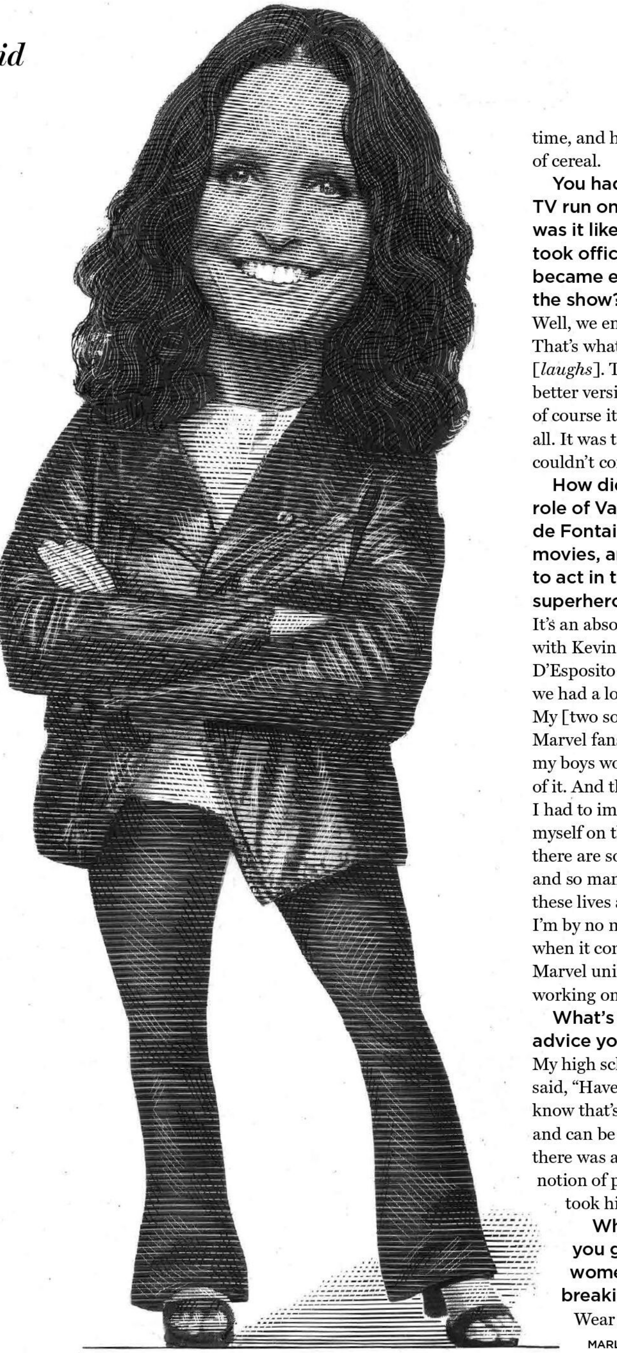
Beth's son works in a weed shop, which made me curious: Do you smoke weed?
I wish I could. I did when I was in college, *a lot,* and then something happened, and I started to get paranoid whenever I smoked pot. I've tried multiple times to go back to it, but I cannot. It makes me *nuts.* And I get very unhappy with it. So, it's not for me.

What do you do to unwind and relax?
You mean what drugs do I take? [*Laughs.*] I exercise a ton, and I love to hike. I love good food, good wine. And when I remember, I knit.

What was your most ambitious knitting project?
It's truly unimpressive: It was a very excellent hat [*laughs*]. But it was good! I've made a few of them. I have a pattern I go to. What's nice about making a hat is that it's a quick project. Doesn't take super long. Like a beanie. A really, really good beanie.

Now that *Seinfeld* is on Netflix, newer generations are enjoying it. What's your theory on why it's remained so timeless?
I just think funny is funny! It was superb writing and, dare I say, a superb cast that supported the writing — and perhaps even elevated it sometimes. It was fuckin' lightning in a bottle.

Do you remember the first time you met Larry David?
It was back in the *SNL* days. We spent a lot of time complaining together because he couldn't get his sketches on the air and I couldn't get anything meaningful or funny to do on the air, so we were bitching and moaning in his office a lot. That was the general memory I have of that time. I do remember meeting Jerry for the first time, and he was eating a bowl of cereal.



You had another long TV run on *Veep.* What was it like when Trump took office and reality became even crazier than the show?
Well, we ended the show! That's what happened [*laughs*]. They were doing a better version of our show, but of course it wasn't funny at all. It was tragic. And we just couldn't compete with that shit.

How did you land the role of Valentina Allegra de Fontaine in the Marvel movies, and what's it like to act in these massive superhero projects?
It's an absolute gas. I met with Kevin Feige and Louis D'Esposito at Marvel, and we had a lovely conversation. My [two sons] are huge Marvel fans, and I thought my boys would get a kick out of it. And then it happened! I had to immediately educate myself on this world, because there are so many characters and so many universes and these lives are so intertwined. I'm by no means a scholar when it comes to the Marvel universe, but I'm working on it.

What's the best piece of advice you've gotten?
My high school physics teacher said, "Have fun at all costs." I know that's a dangerous phrase, and can be misunderstood, but there was a lot to be said for the notion of pursuing fun. And I took his advice.

What advice would you give young women who are breaking into comedy?
Wear sunscreen.

MARLOW STERN

ILLUSTRATION BY Mark Summers